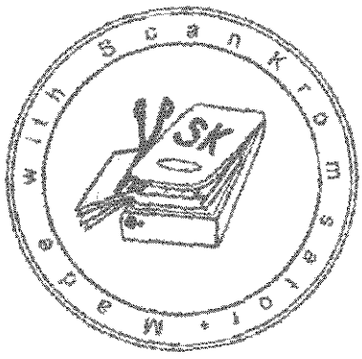
modern benoni

EVERYMAN CHESS

Andrew Kinsman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by Andrew Kinsman

EVERYMAN CHESS

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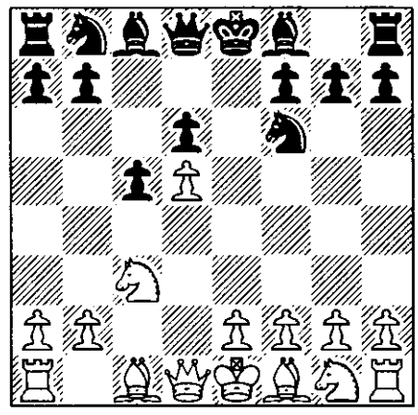

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6

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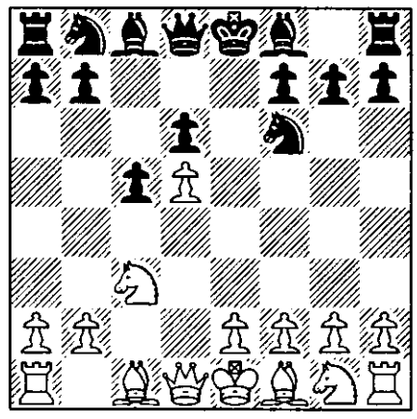
INTRODUCTION



The Modern Benoni is generally defined as the position that arises after **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6**. Straightaway there is an imbalance in the pawn structure caused by the exchange of Black's e-pawn for the white c-pawn. White now has an extra pawn in the centre, whereas his opponent has an extra queenside pawn. It is this key characteristic which defines the Modern Benoni and shapes the way that each side will employ his pieces in the opening and then develop a middlegame strategy. In principle, White will concentrate on the kingside and in the centre, whereas Black's aspirations will normally reside on the queenside.

The Modern Benoni Pawn Structure

One of the key advantages of the Modern Benoni from Black's point of view is that, having lured the white pawn to d5, there is no pawn obstruction along the long diagonal from g7 to b2. Black will take immediate advantage of this by a fianchetto of his king's bishop with ...g7-g6 and ...♗g7. From g7 the black bishop eyes the important d4- and e5-squares and offers long-distance support for an advance of the black b-pawn from b7 to b5 to b4.

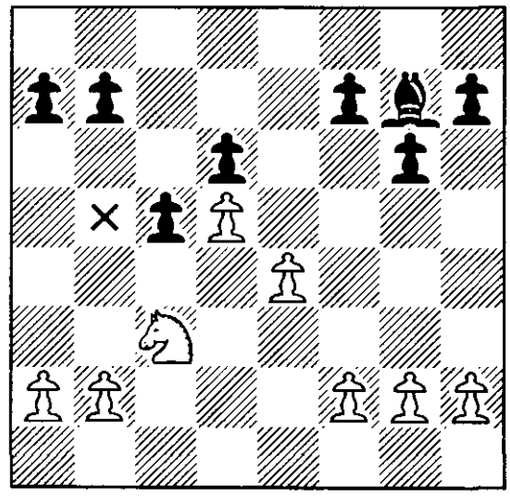


Diagram 1

The main drawback of the kingside fianchetto is that the bishop may become blocked out of the game should White achieve a timely e4-e5. Furthermore, the dark squares around the black king are not exactly secure and the f6-square in particular may suffer from the absence of pawn cover. Finally, the backward d6-pawn is a clear weakness that will require constant cover from Black's other pieces.

see following diagram

It is useful to look at the Modern Benoni from the point of view of pawn breaks, since often the player who

achieves his pawn breakthrough first will take control of the game.

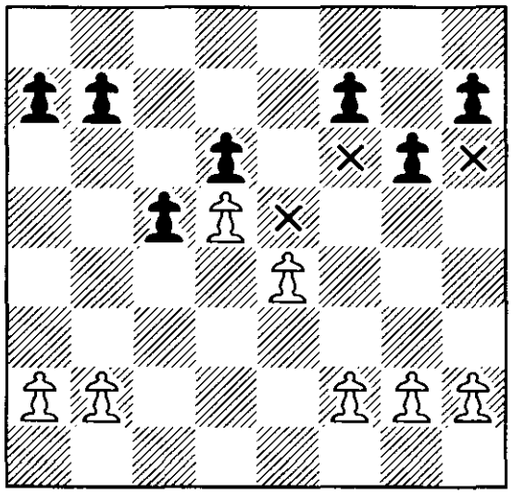


Diagram 2

The e4-e5 Break for White

The most important pawn break in the whole of the Modern Benoni is White's e4-e5. This can be arranged either by supporting it with a pawn through f2-f4 (see Chapters 4 and 5) or perhaps with a bishop on f4 and/or rook on e1. If White is able to achieve the e4-e5 break with impunity then it will often be the prelude to a crushing attack. Black's key bishop in g7 is snuffed out and White is able to use the e4-square as a launching pad.

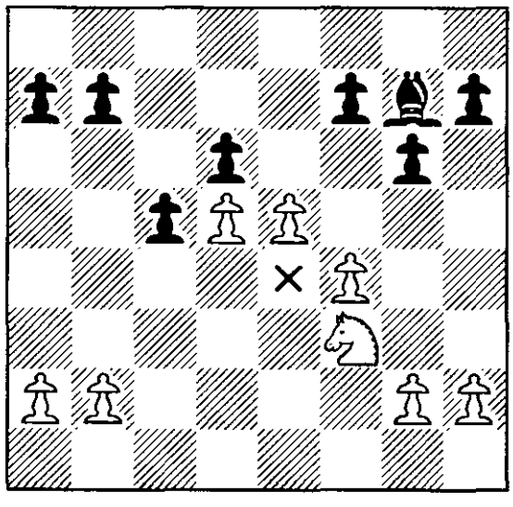


Diagram 3

Furthermore, if Black responds with ...d6xe5 then the d5-pawn instantly becomes a passed pawn and White may be able to wreak havoc with a timely d5-d6. So, Black players must always beware this advance above all else.

In many of the important variations of the Benoni Black's whole strategy is based around controlling the e5-square (typically with a knight on d7 and a rook on e8) and putting pressure on the white e-pawn, so that White never has time for e4-e5. For example, in Chapter 3, Games 18-20, Black plays ...♘e5 and ...g6-g5 to ensure that the e5-square remains well and truly under his control (diagram 4), while in many other lines Black rushes to exchange his light-squared bishop for the white knight on f3 to remove a key player in the struggle for the e5-square (diagram 5).

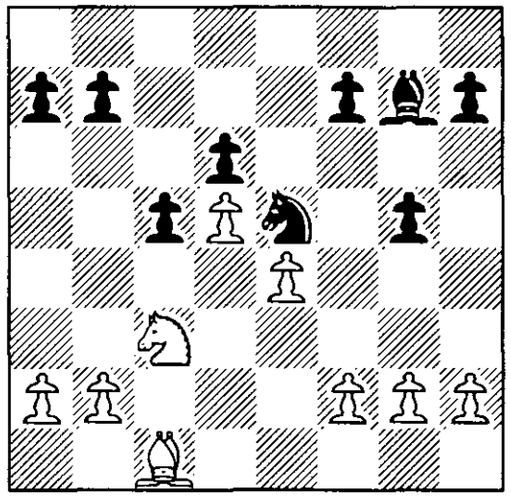


Diagram 4

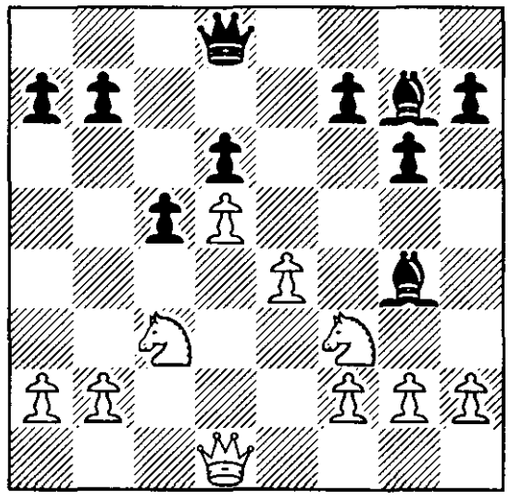


Diagram 5

In the dangerous Four Pawns Attack and Flick-Knife Attack variations of Chapters 4 and 5 White places a pawn on f4 straightaway, immediately declaring his intention to force through e4-e5. In these positions it is absolutely vital that Black plays as actively as possible as otherwise he will be squashed by the e4-e5 advance. A good illustration of this is provided by Chapter 5, Games 29 and 30. In each instance Black ignored this fundamental concept and was duly despatched in no uncertain terms.

It is worth noting that White only rarely plays f4-f5 in these variations (unless he has already played a positional pawn sacrifice with e4-e5, ...d6xe5). There is a very good reason for this: the f4-f5 advance concedes the vital e5-square. Once the white pawn has gone to f5 Black will be able to use the e5-square as a key outpost for his pieces (ideally, a knight).

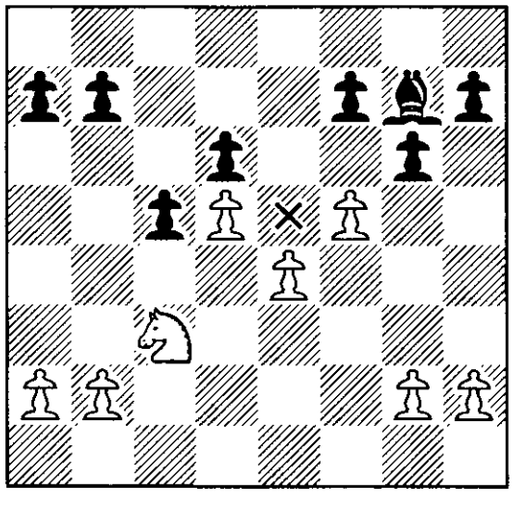


Diagram 6

The ...b7-b5 Break for Black

One of the best ways for Black to prevent his opponent's central and kingside aspiration is by arranging a distraction on the queenside with ...b7-b5, taking full advantage of his extra pawn in that sector of the board. This advance prevents White from having it all his own way, as he will usually have to take steps to neutralise Black's queenside play. This will reduce his potential elsewhere, even if he has made preparations to meet ...b7-b5 with a5xb6.

Chapter 3, Game 15, and Chapter 5, Game 31, are good examples of how a timely ...b7-b5 break can force White onto the back foot.

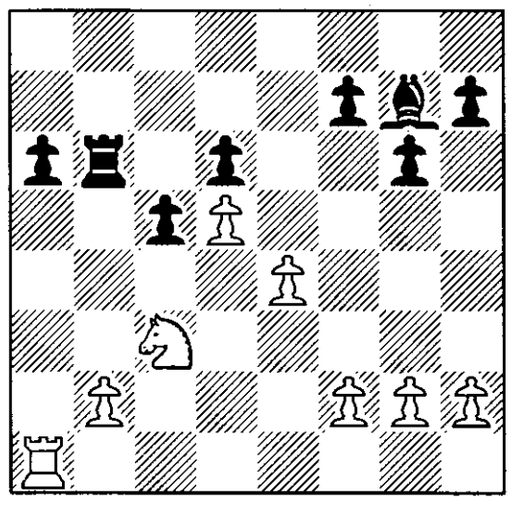


Diagram 7

The ...b7-b5 advance is rarely effective on its own; it requires good co-ordination in Black's other forces. For example, in Chapter 2, Game 7, Black is so cramped that ...b7-b5 does nothing to help his position, while in Chapter 6, Game 39, Black had already placed his queen on the uncomfortable b4-square where it obstructed the progress of the b-pawn to b4 and left the queen without a retreat square.

The b2-b4 Break for White

Apart from the e4-e5 advance, which we have already discussed, White has one other typical pawn break, b2-b4. Although this move is seen far less often than e4-e5, it can be very effective in undermining the c5-square and stopping Back's queenside play in its tracks. A good example of this is Chapter 3, Game 21, where Black took so long in getting his b-pawn to b5 that White was able to arrange

b2-b4, meeting ...c5-c4 with a4-a5 and a total clamp on the queenside. This structure is very favourable for White in principle, since Black's passed c-pawn is more than offset by the fact that White is able to assume control of the vital d4-square.

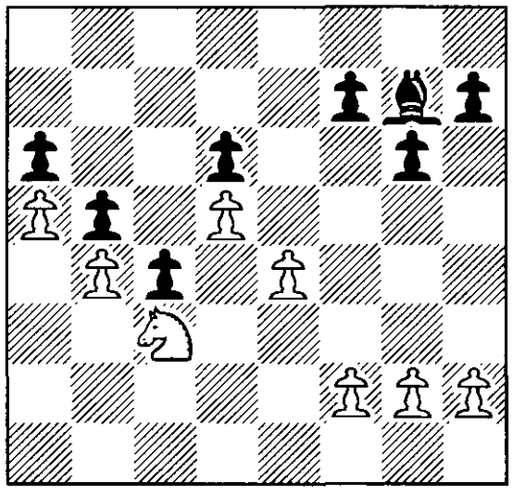


Diagram 8

If Black places his queen on c7 early on in the Modern Benoni then the idea of ♖c1 and b2-b4, taking advantage of the position of the queen on the same file as the white rook, often becomes very attractive for White.

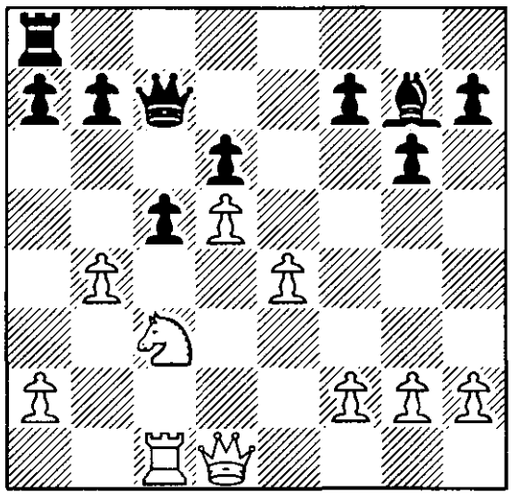


Diagram 9

The ...f7-f5 Break for Black

There is also one other important source of counterplay for Black, ...f7-f5. At first sight this move appears ugly as it weakens the kingside, and the e6-square in particular. However, in the right circumstances it can be an important weapon, removing the e4-pawn from the board, isolating the white d-pawn and bringing the black rook into play on the kingside. Typically, the ...f7-f5 break is only seen when White is unable to get to e6 with his knight and Black is able to recapture on f5 with a piece rather than a pawn. Thus it becomes a fully viable option in Chapter 8, Game 47, and Chapter 9, Games 56 and 57, where White has diverted his knight from f3 to the queenside.

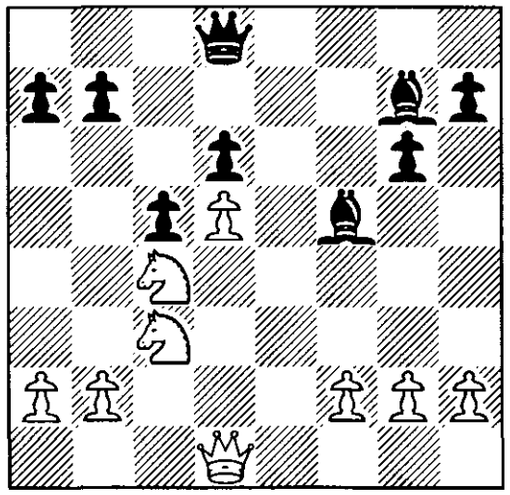


Diagram 10

The ...f7-f5 advance is less effective, however, in circumstances such as Chapter 10, Game 58, since the white knight is able to switch back to f3 and Black's kingside is therefore more vulnerable.

The Role of the Minor Pieces

The pawn structure of the Modern Benoni is such that, in the early stages at least, the employment of the minor pieces is of paramount importance. Black is pretty much committed to a kingside fianchetto, but he is unable to commit his other pieces until White has declared his hand.

The white pawn on d5 ensures that White has a space advantage, so in principle exchanges will free Black's position. In general, an exchange of Black's light-squared bishop for the white knight on f3 is very desirable (see diagram 5 above). Indeed, this idea forms a fundamental part of the key variations of the classical main line (Chapter 3, Games 13-16) and Four Pawns Attack (Chapter 4, Games 22-24).

Assuming White has played ♘f3, he has two main ways of avoiding this exchange. First, he can transfer the knight from f3 round to the c4-square. However, usually it can then be challenged by ...♘e5 or ...♘b6 when an exchange of knights will leave Black's remaining pieces with more scope.

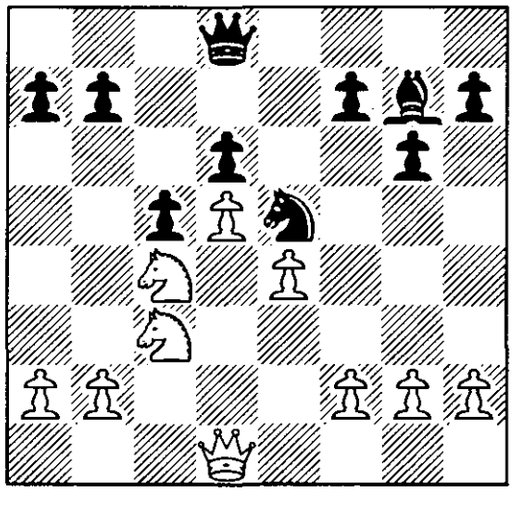


Diagram 11

Alternatively, White can play h2-h3. It is this idea, the modern main line, which has come to the forefront of Modern Benoni theory in the past decade (see Chapters 1 and 2). White retains his knight on f3 and intends to develop his pieces with e2-e4, ♗d3, 0-0, ♗f4 and ♖e1, when they act in an ideal cohesive fashion to support e4-e5.

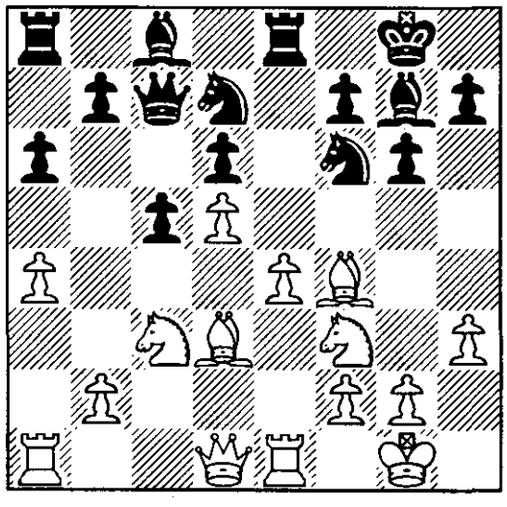
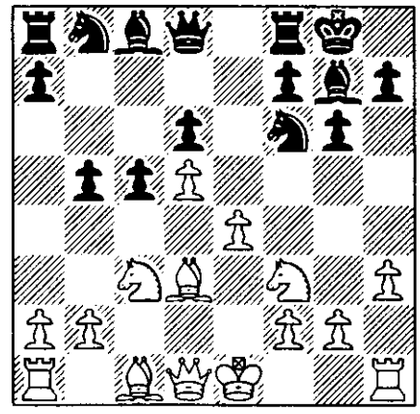


Diagram 12

In this position Black is struggling to develop any counterplay. His pieces have little scope and he is unable to free his game with exchanges or pawn breaks. Meanwhile, White is able to build up his position more or less at leisure.

Without further ado, let us move on to a more formal discussion of this important variation.

CHAPTER ONE



Modern Main Line with ...b7-b5 (8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5

In this opening chapter we shall be looking at one of the most important variations of the Modern Benoni as theory stands at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Dissatisfied with the positions that White achieves in the classical main line (particularly the ...♗g4) lines (see Chapter 3), a new main line with h2-h3 and ♗d3, cutting out the pin and reinforcing the e-pawn, has been developed. The key question in this variation is whether or not Black can get away with an immediate ...b7-b5, attempting to generate immediate counterplay while the white king is still in the centre. It is this issue which we shall address here (other systems after 9 ♗d3 are considered in Chapter 2).

White has two main ways of meeting 9...b5: 10 ♘xb5 and 10 ♗xb5. The former (see Games 1-4) is considered to be the sharper of these two alternatives. However, there is nothing wrong with 10 ♗xb5 either, as we shall observe in Games 5 and 6.

We start by looking at one of the landmark games in this line.

Game 1

Alburt-De Firmian

USA Ch., Jacksonville 1990

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 h3

A sneaky move, avoiding any monkey business with ...♗g4 – see Chapter 2, Game 11.

7...♗g7

The alternative 7...a6 8 a4 ♕e7 is discussed in Chapter 2, Game 12.

8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3

After 9 ♗g5 (9 ♗e3 ♖e8 10 ♘d2 a6 11 a4 ♘xe4! 12 ♘cxe4 f5 worked out well for Black in D.Barria-Minzer, Torre Blanca 1998, and 9 ♗f4?! ♖e8 10 ♗d3 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 f5 was very bad for White in Henderson-Kinsman, 4NCL 1999/2000) 9...h6 10 ♗e3 ♖e8 11 ♗d3 (or 11 ♘d2 a6 12 a4 ♘xe4!) 11...c4 12 ♗c2 Black could have tried 12...b5!? in Flear-Chabanon, France 2000.

9...b5!?

See Chapter 2 for Black's other possibilities here.

10 ♘xb5

White must take up the gauntlet with this move or 10 ♗xb5 (see Games 5 and

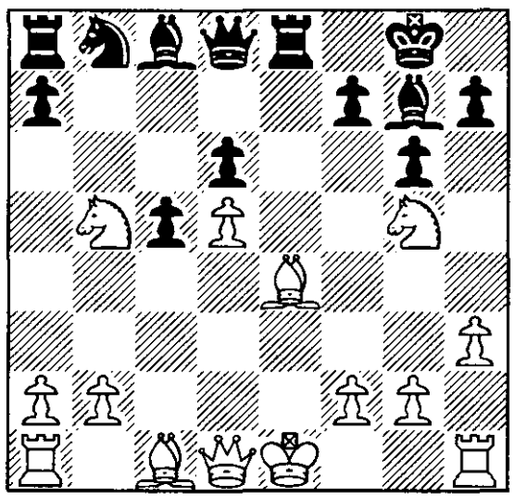
6), as it is impossible to believe that 10 0-0 can be correct here. In that case Black can simply play 10...b4 with a comfortable game after 11 ♘a4 ♗a6; 11 ♘b1 ♖e8 12 ♕c2 ♗a6; or 11 ♘e2 ♖e8 12 ♘g3 ♘bd7. 10 a3 also looks too slow for White.

10...♘xe4?!

Subsequently this move has been replaced in top-level play by 10...♖e8 (see Games 2-4).

11 ♗xe4 ♖e8 12 ♘g5!

At the time this was a stunning new move. Indeed, Alburt's innovation was recognised as the most important theoretical novelty of *Informator 50*. Prior to this game Black had been enjoying some success in this line after 12 ♘d2 ♗a6, reaching a position that is considered in Game 3 via the move order 10...♖e8 11 ♘d2 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗a6.



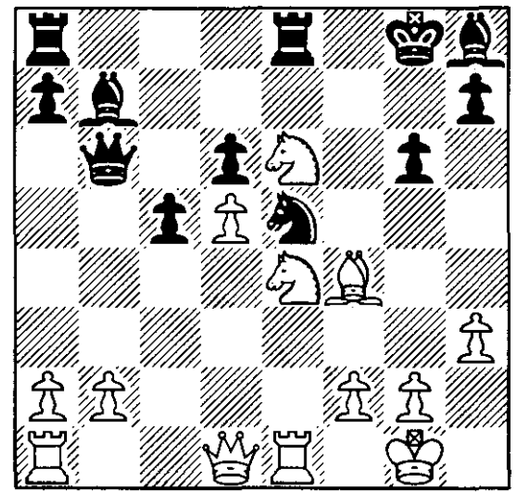
12...f5

The other natural move 12...h6 is met by 13 ♘e6! fxe6 14 0-0, when Black's position is a total wreck, while the complications after the tricky 12...♗a6 13 a4 ♗xb2 (or 13...♗f6 14 ♘e6!) also favour White after 14 ♘e6! Most Black players have resorted to 12...♕a5+ 13 ♘c3, but after 13...♗a6 (or 13...h6 14 ♘e6!) 14 ♗d2 ♘d7 15 ♕c2 f5 16 ♘e6 White has everything under control. Finally, 12....♗f5 is simply met by 13 0-0 ♗xe4 14 ♖e1 ♗c2 15 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 16 ♘xd6.

13 0-0 fxe4 14 ♖e1

The black e-pawn is a sitting duck.

14...♕b6 15 ♘c3 ♘d7 16 ♘cxe4 ♗b7 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 18 ♘e6 ♗h8



19 ♘4xc5!

In such positions, combinations seem to flow naturally.

19...dxc5 20 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♖xe5 ♕d6 22 ♖g5 ♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♖xe6 25 ♖xc5 ♖e2

In this double-rook ending White faces one or two technical difficulties, but he manages to convert his extra material in the end.

26 ♖ac1 ♖f8 27 ♖1c2 ♖fxf2 28 ♖c8+ ♔g7 29 ♖8c7+ ♔h6 30 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 31 ♖b7 a6 32 a4 ♔g5 33 b4 h5 34 ♖b6 ♖b2 35 b5 a5 36 ♖a6 ♔f4 37 ♖xg6 ♖b4 38 ♖f6+ ♔g3 39 ♖f1 ♖xa4 40 ♖b1 ♖b4 41 ♖xb4 axb4 42 b6 1-0

Game 2

Gelfand-Topalov

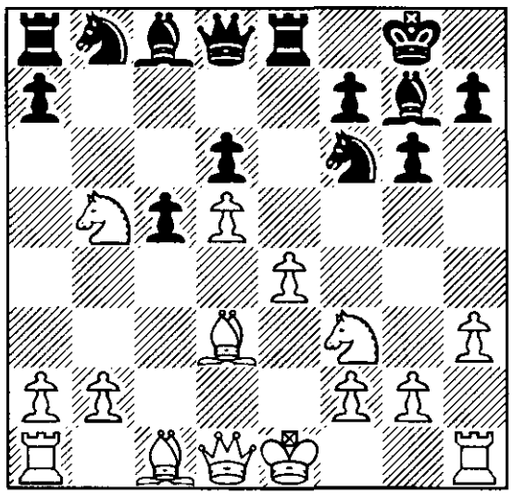
Moscow Olympiad 1994

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5 10 ♘xb5 ♖e8

see following diagram

11 0-0

White's alternatives here are considered in Games 3 and 4.



11...♘xe4 12 ♖e1

In view of his conspicuous lack of success with this move, several alternatives have been tried for White here:

a) 12 ♕b3 a6 13 ♘a3 (13 ♘c3 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♘d7 15 ♗e3 ♖b8 gives Black the initiative) 13...♘d7! 14 ♘c4 ♖b8 15 ♕c2 f5 16 ♖e1 (in Karpov-Kamsky, FIDE World Championship, Elista 1996, White tried 16 ♗f4?!, when after 16...♘b6 17 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 18 ♖ab1 ♗f7 Black had easy equality, while 16...♘df6!? may be even better) 16...♘df6 and now 17 ♘g5 was played in Epishin-Gi.Hernandez, Philadelphia 1998, and Atalik-Sziebert, Cappelle la Grande open 2000. Instead of 17...♘xd5 Black could now have tried 17...h6!? 18 ♘xe4 fxe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗f5 20 f3 ♘xe4 21 fxe4 ♕h4 with a very dynamic position.

b) 12 ♕a4 and now:

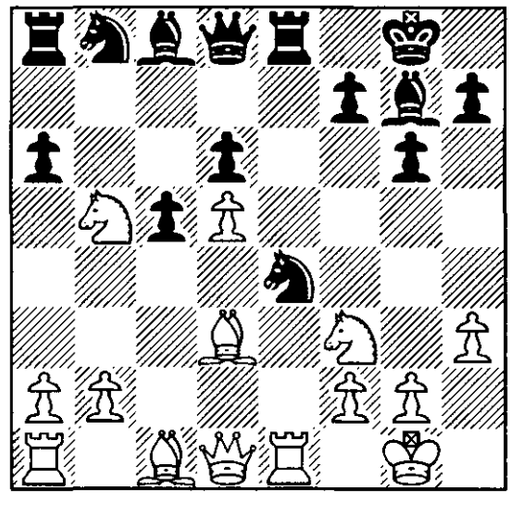
b1) 12...♗d7 13 ♖e1 (13 ♗xe4 ♗xb5 14 ♕xb5 ♖xe4 is more than satisfactory for Black) 13...a6 transposes to variation 'a' in the note to White's 13th move below.

b2) 12...a6 13 ♗xe4 (13 ♖e1 transposes to the note to White's 13th move below) 13...♗d7 14 ♗d3 ♕b6 15 ♘g5, as in Avrukh-Greenfeld, Beersheva 1997, and Sulman-Filippov, Linares 1997, which both continued 15...♗xb5 (Black can also possibly consider 15...♗d4!? to cut off the white queen from the kingside) 16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♕h4!? h6 18 ♘e4 g5 19 ♕g4 ♕d7 20 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♘xd6 ♖e5 22 g4! with a very unclear endgame.

c) 12 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♘g5 (13 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 14 ♕xe1 ♗b7 15 ♗g5 ♕d7 16 ♘c3 ♘a6 proved more than satisfactory for Black in the game Mowsziszian-Kinsman, German Bundesliga 1995) 13...♖b4 14 ♕f3 ♗f5 (14...♖xb5 15 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 16 ♖e1 ♗d7 17 ♗d2 looks very risky for Black indeed) 15 g4 ♗f6 16 gxf5 ♗xg5 17 fxg6 hxg6 18 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 19 ♗xg5 ♘d7 20 ♖fe1 ♖d4 21 ♖e7 ♕xd5 22 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 with a finely balanced endgame in Van Wely-Topalov, Monaco blindfold 1999.

12...a6!

It is important for Black to nudge the knight offside to a3 before retreating his own knight, e.g. 12...♘f6 13 ♗f4! and the d6-pawn is already under fire.



13 ♘a3

In the last few years several White players have experimented with trying to maintain the knight on b5 with 13 ♕a4. Black has two plausible responses:

a) 13...♗d7 14 ♕a3! and now:

a1) 14...♗xb5 15 ♗xb5 ♘d7 16 ♗c6 obviously favours White.

a2) 14...♕b6 (forcing the white knight finally to retreat) 15 ♘c3 ♘xc3 16 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 17 bxc3 ♘d7 18 ♗f4 ♕c7 19 ♖e1 (19 ♖b1 is also tempting) 19...♘f6 20 c4 a5,

when a draw was agreed after 21 ♕c1 a4 22 ♗d2 ♗d7 23 ♗c3 ♖e8 24 ♖xe8+ in Wells-De Firmian, Copenhagen open 1996. However, White may have had a slight plus after 21 ♘g5 instead of the passive 21 ♕c1.

a3) 14...♘xf2!? (a daring sacrifice) 15 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 16 ♔xf2 c4 17 ♕xd6! ♘d7 18 ♗g5, as in Zakharevich-R.Sherbakov, Yekatarinburg 1999, when Sherbakov recommends 18...♘f6 19 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♘c3 cxd3 21 ♖d1 with a slight pull for White.

b) 13...♘d7 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♕xe4 ♘f6 and now:

b1) 16 ♕e2 axb5 17 ♗xb5 ♗b7 18 ♗g5 (or 18 ♗c6 ♗xc6 19 dxc6 ♕b6 and Black rounds up the c-pawn) 18...♗xd5 19 a4 h6 20 ♗f4 and a draw was agreed in Avrukh-Pigusov, Linares open 1997. In fact, Black has a very active game here and could have played for a win with 20...♘h5 followed by ...♕f6.

b2) 16 ♕h4 axb5 17 ♗xb5 ♕b6 18 a4 ♗b7 19 ♗h6 ♗xd5 20 ♘d2 ♕b7 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕g3 with approximately equal chances in Lobron-Topalov, Dortmund 1996.

13...♘f6 14 ♖xe8+

14 ♘c4 was introduced in the game Rechlis-Psakhis, Israel 1996, but after 14...♖xe1+ 15 ♕xe1 ♗b7 16 ♗f4 ♗f8! Black was okay.

14...♘xe8 15 ♗g5

15 ♘c4 can be met by either the immediate 15...♘d7 or the sharper 15...♗b7 16 ♗c2 ♘d7 17 ♗d2 ♘ef6!?

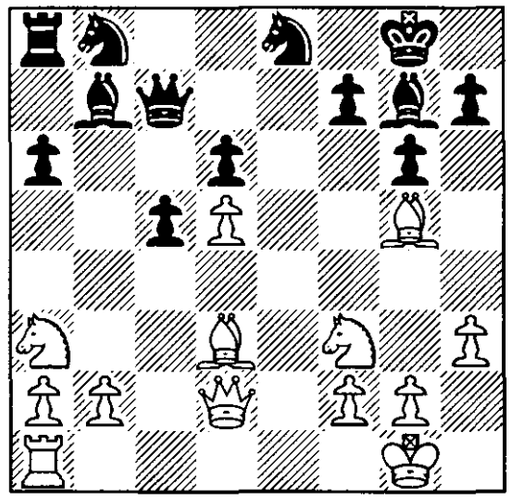
15...♕c7!

Black should maintain his dark-squared bishop on active duty. In Dreev-De Firmian, Biel 1995, he quickly ran into problems after 15...♗f6 16 ♕d2 ♘d7 (16...♗b7 17 ♗e4 ♘d7 18 ♘c4 transposes) 17 ♘c4 ♗b7 18 ♗e4, i.e. 18...♗xg5 19 ♘xg5 ♘df6 20 ♖e1 h6 21 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 22 ♕xh6 and White won quickly.

16 ♕d2

After 16 ♕e2 ♘f6 17 ♘c4 ♘bd7 or 16 ♕a4 ♘f6 17 ♖e1 ♗b7, as in Cebalo-Chabanon, Geneva open 1996, White has to start worrying about his isolated d-pawn.

16...♗b7



17 ♖e1

White probably should have settled for more or less equality with 17 ♗c4 ♘d7 18 ♖e1 ♘ef6 19 b3, since his ♗c2-b3 manoeuvre in the game is a waste of time.

17...♘d7 18 ♗c2 ♘ef6 19 ♗b3 ♖e8 20 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 21 ♘c4 ♘ef6

This knight has been oscillating between e4, f6 and e8 since move 10 and now finds a home, for the time being at least. The pressure on the d5-pawn begins to mount.

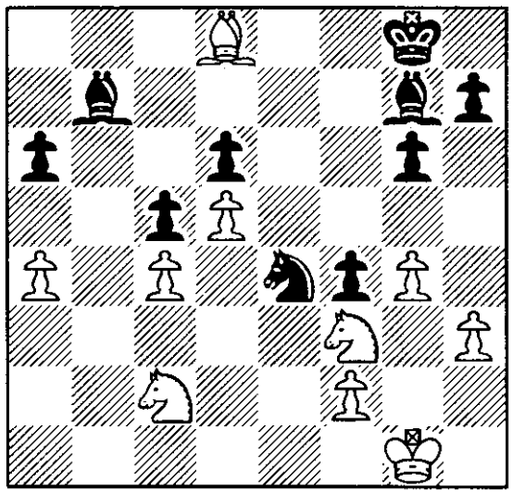
22 ♗f4 ♗f8!

Black is not afraid to retreat the bishop as he knows it is only a temporary backward step.

23 ♘e3 ♘b6 24 ♕d3 ♕d7 25 ♗c4 ♘xc4 26 ♕xc4 ♕b5 27 b3 ♕b4 28 ♗g5 ♗g7 29 a4 ♘e4 30 ♗d8 f5 31 g4 f4 32 ♘c2 ♕xc4 33 bxc4

Although White has managed to 'unisolate' his d-pawn by linking it up with his c-pawn, the endgame is still very bad for him. In the rest of the game Topalov ruthlessly utilises his two bishops to exploit White's numerous pawn

weaknesses.



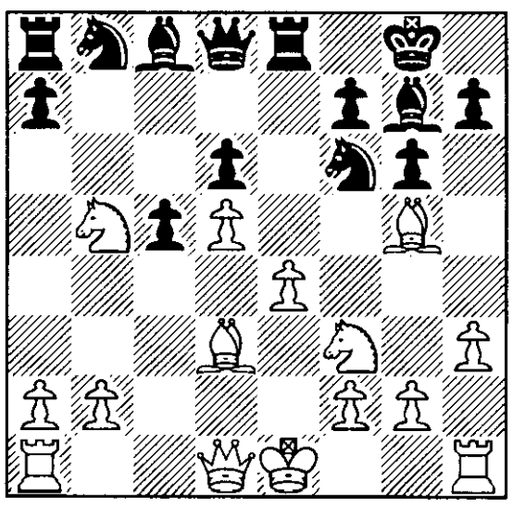
33...♗c8 34 a5 h6 35 ♔f1 ♔f7 36 ♔e2 ♔e8 37 ♗c7 ♔d7 38 ♗b6 ♔e7 39 ♘d2 ♘c3+ 40 ♔f3 g5 41 ♘e4 ♗d7 42 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 43 ♔e2 ♗f6 44 ♘a3 ♗a4 45 ♘b1 ♗c2 46 ♘d2 ♗c3 47 ♘f3 ♗b4 48 ♗c7 ♔d7 49 ♗b6 ♗b3 50 ♔d3 ♔e8 51 ♗c7 ♔e7 52 ♗b6 ♔d7 53 ♘g1 ♗e1 54 f3 ♗a2 55 ♔e2 ♗b4 56 ♔d3 ♗b1+ 57 ♔e2 ♗c3 58 h4 gxh4 59 ♘h3 ♗e5 60 ♘f2 ♗g6 0-1

Game 3

Van Wely-Topalov

Wijk aan Zee 1998

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5 10 ♘xb5 ♖e8 11 ♘d2



This is the most common alternative to 11 0-0. Instead 11 ♘c3 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 f5 is harmless, but 11 ♗g5!? is worth considering – see the next main game.

11...♘xe4

This sacrificial line is thought to be adequate for Black. In return for the exchange and a pawn (or two) Black is able to generate a powerful attack against the white king. The main alternative is 11...♘xd5, exploiting the pin on the e-file in a different way. Play could then continue 12 ♘c4 (12 0-0 ♘f4 13 ♘c4 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♗a6 should be okay for Black) 12...♘b4 13 ♗e2 (it is important to preserve this bishop) 13...♖xe4 14 ♘cxd6 ♖e5 with a very unclear position.

12 ♗xe4 ♗a6 13 a4 ♕a5! 14 ♘xd6 ♘d7 15 ♕c2

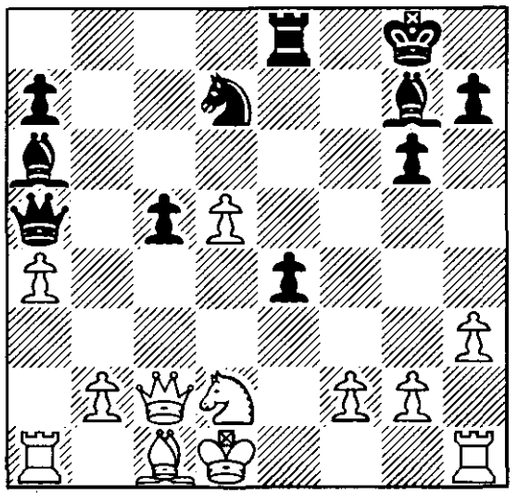
Practically the only move, since both 15 f3? ♗e5 16 ♔f2 ♗xd6 17 ♖e1 c4, as in Gen.Timoshchenko-Shabalov, Barnaul 1988, and 15 g4 ♖xe4+ 16 ♘xe4 ♘e5 17 ♖a3 ♘d3, as in Kozul-Barlov, Kladovo 1989, lead to serious problems for White.

15...f5 16 ♘xe8

White should take the rook straightaway, since 16 ♔d1 fxe4 17 ♘xe8 ♗d3! looks even more dangerous than the game continuation, while if White tries 17 ♘2c4 instead of 17 ♘xe8 then 17...♗xc4 18 ♘xc4 ♕a6 19 ♖e1 ♘b6! 20 ♘xb6 axb6 worked out well for Black in Sarno-Garcia Gonzales, Aosta open 1989.

16...♖xe8 17 ♔d1 fxe4

Strangely enough, I was actually present in the Estonian village of Vosu on the first occasion that this position arose in tournament play. Lokotar-Marin, Vosu 1989, continued 18 ♘xe4 ♕b4 19 f3 ♖e5 20 ♘c3 ♕d4+ 21 ♕d2 ♗d3 and was eventually drawn by perpetual check. In our game Van Wely decides to reinforce his defences by bringing the queen's rook into action, but Black still manages to generate some dangerous attacking chances.



18 ♖a3 c4

A new, and probably good move. Previously White had achieved some success after 18...♗d3 19 ♖xd3 cxd3 20 ♕xd3 ♕xa4+ 21 b3 ♘e5 22 ♕e3, as for example in Legky-Jurkovic, Le Mans open 1990.

19 ♖e3?

Van Wely falters, although he suggests that Black also has a strong attack after 19 ♖e1 ♕xd5 20 ♖xe4 ♖d8! 21 ♖ae3 ♘c5.

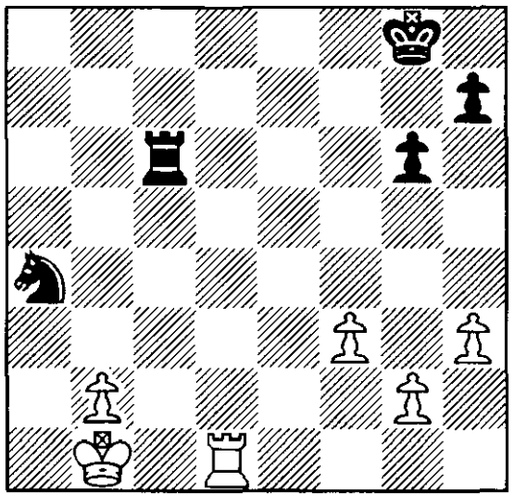
19...♕xd5 20 ♖xe4 ♖f8 21 f3 ♘c5 22 ♖e7 ♗f6 23 ♖xa7 c3 24 ♖xa6

After 24 bxc3 ♗d3 or 24...♗c4 the black pieces are starting to converge on White's king.

24...cxd2 25 ♖xf6

The desperado rook munches everything in its path.

25...dxc1♕+ 26 ♔xc1 ♖xf6 27 ♖d1 ♕c6 28 ♔b1 ♘xa4 29 ♕xc6 ♖xc6



The dust has finally settled and White has shed a piece. Although he does not put up the stiffest possible resistance, the endgame is very difficult to defend.

30 ♖d8+ ♔g7 31 ♖d7+ ♔h6 32 h4 ♘c5 33 ♖f7 ♘e6 34 ♔a2 ♖a6+ 35 ♔b1 ♘d4 36 ♖f4 ♘f5 37 ♖e4 ♖d6 38 ♔c2 ♘g3 39 ♖g4 ♘f1 40 ♔c3 ♘e3 41 ♖g5 ♘f5 42 ♖g4 ♔h5 43 b4 ♘e3 44 ♖d4 ♖xd4 45 ♔xd4 ♘c2+ 46 ♔e5 ♘xb4 47 ♔f6 ♘d5+ 48 ♔g7 ♘e3 0-1

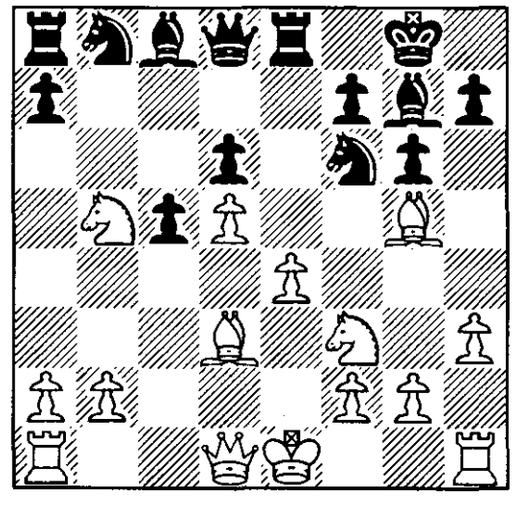
Game 4

Parker-Kinsman

4NCL 1997/98

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5 10 ♘xb5 ♖e8 11 ♗g5!?

This relatively unexplored variation poses Black some interesting problems.



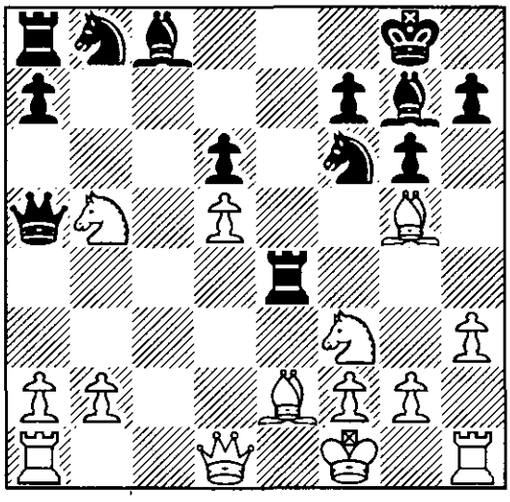
11...c4

The obvious response, trying to blast things open in the centre. Instead 11...♕b6 allows White to develop his pieces without too many problems, e.g. 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♕b3 ♘a6 14 0-0 ♘b4 15 ♘d2 ♘xd3 16 ♕xd3 ♗a6 (not 16...a6?! 17 ♘a3! ♕xb2 18 ♘c4 and Black has serious difficulties) 17 a4 ♖eb8 18 ♕f3 ♗xb5 19 axb5 ♗xb2 20 ♖a2 with a pleasant advantage for White in Zakharevich-

Berelovich, Azov 1995.

12 ♗xc4 ♖xe4+ 13 ♗e2 ♕a5+ 14 ♔f1

An attempted improvement over 14 ♘d2 ♗a6 15 ♘c3 ♗xe2 16 ♘xe2 ♖e5 17 ♗f4 ♖xd5 18 0-0 with a very complicated position in Krasenkov-Gdanski, Polish Championship play-off, Warsaw 1997.

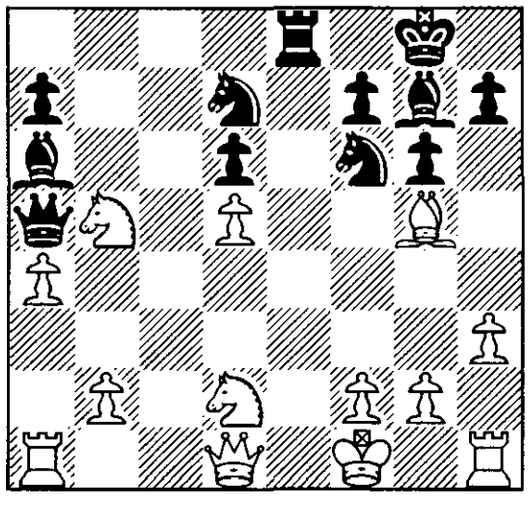


14...♗a6 15 a4 ♘bd7 16 ♘d2 ♖xe2!

This is practically forced, since 16...♖e7 17 ♘c4 ♗xb5 18 ♘xa5 ♗xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 ♖xe2 20 ♔xe2 is unattractive for Black.

17 ♕xe2 ♖e8 18 ♕d1!

White calmly returns some of the material in order to gain some time to evacuate his king. After 18 ♗e3 ♖xe3! 19 ♕xe3 (not 19 fxe3? ♗xb5 20 ♕xb5 ♕xd2) 19...♗xb5+ 20 ♔g1 ♗a6 Black had a big initiative in F.Lipinsky-Palkovi, Balaton-bereny 1997.



18...♘xd5?!

Perhaps I should have tried 18...♗xb5+ 19 axb5 ♕xb5+ 20 ♔g1 ♕xd5, as the game continuation is even worse. I am not convinced by Palkovi's suggestion of 18...♘e4 19 ♘xe4 ♖xe4, as after 20 ♔g1 White is very close to co-ordinating his forces, although admittedly this is better than my choice.

19 ♔g1! ♗xb5

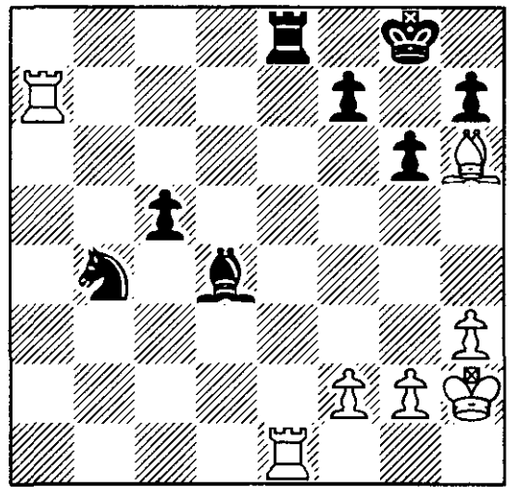
20 ♘c4 was a serious threat.

20 axb5 ♕xb5 21 ♕b3 ♕xb3

It would have been better to keep the queens on with 21...♕c5.

22 ♘xb3 ♗xb2 23 ♖xa7 ♘c5 24 ♘xc5 dxc5 25 ♔h2 ♗d4 26 ♗h6 ♘b4 27 ♖e1!

Suddenly Black has serious back-rank problems.



27...♖c8 28 ♖c7 ♖a8 29 ♖a7 ♖c8 30 ♖c7 ♖a8 31 f4 ♘d5 32 ♖d7 ♘e3 33 ♖e7 1-0

Game 5
Karpov-Topalov
Las Palmas 1996

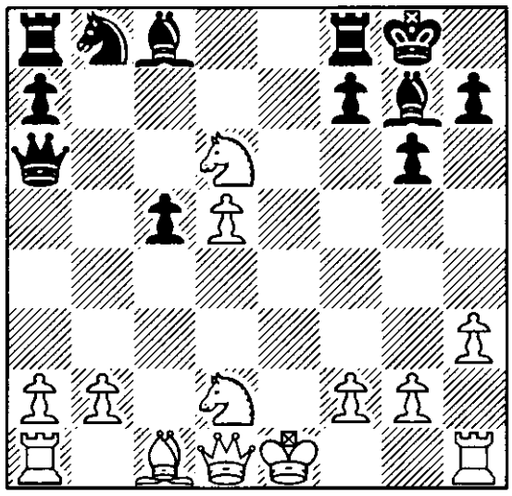
1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5 10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘fd2

12 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♕xb5 and 12 ♗d2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕xb2 are more than satisfactory for Black, as White is still a

long way from getting his king to safety.

12...♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕a6

13...♕d3 14 ♘2c4 ♕xd1+ 15 ♔xd1 ♗a6 16 ♔c2! gives White a promising endgame, as it is not easy for Black to regain the pawn and the white king will be well placed on c2.



14 ♘2c4 ♘d7

14...♖d8!? is the subject of the next main game.

15 0-0 ♘b6

In view of Black's problems in the main line, it is worth considering 15...♘e5!? 16 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 (not 16...♕xc4 17 ♘e7+) 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♖e1 (to meet 18...♖fe8 with 19 ♗g5!, giving up the b-pawn to get the d-pawn rolling) 18...♕f6 and now:

a) 19 ♖b1 ♖fd8 20 b3 ♗d4 21 ♕c2 ♖xd5 and Black had already regained his pawn in Atalik-Velimirovic, Yugoslavia 1999.

b) 19 ♕g4 ♗d4 20 ♖e2 h5 21 ♕e4 ♖b8 22 ♖b1 ♖b4 23 ♕c2 (perhaps 23 ♗e3!?) 23...♖d8 24 ♗d2 ♖b7 25 ♗e3 ♗xe3 petered out to a draw in Blagojevic-Kovacevic, Ulcinj 1997.

16 ♘xb6

16 ♘e3 is also interesting. The game Crouch-Tan, Newport 1998, continued 16...♖d8 17 ♘e4 ♗d4 18 ♘c2 ♗g7 19 ♕f3 (19 ♘e3, repeating moves, was probably White's best course of action) 19...f5 20 ♘c3 ♗b7 21 ♗g5 ♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 and for some reason a draw was agreed, though Black must be clearly better here.

16...♕xb6

I suppose that 16...axb6 has the advantage of keeping the c-pawn protected, but it releases some of the pressure on the b2-pawn and blocks the line of the queen across the third rank. After 17 ♘xc8 White can meet both 17...♖axc8 and 17...♖fxc8 by 18 d6, when I would be concerned about the d-pawn going all the way, but White can also try 17 ♕b3!? with the simple idea of unravelling with 18 ♗g5.

17 ♘xc8

The greedy 17 ♘c4 ♕a6 18 ♘e3 looks too passive to promise White anything much.

17...♖axc8 18 ♖b1!?

A fashionable idea at the time. White's other alternatives are not terribly promising:

a) 18 ♕c2 ♖fd8 19 ♖d1 ♗d4 20 ♕c4 ♕b7 21 ♗e3 ♕xd5 and the d-pawn had already been rounded up in Salov-Tal, Skelleftea World Cup 1989.

b) 18 ♕b3 c4 19 ♕xb6 axb6 20 a4 ♖fd8 and a draw was agreed in Illescas-Shirov, Linares 1995.

c) 18 ♖e1 ♖fe8 (18...♖d7 allows White to develop his pieces with 19 ♗g5 ♖d7 20 ♕a4 ♕d6 21 ♖ad1 ♗d4 22 b4!, when he is certainly getting somewhere – Psakhis) 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20 ♗e3 ♗d4! 21 ♕d2 ♖d8 22 ♖d1 and the players settled for a draw in Hauchard-Degraeve, Belfort 1998.

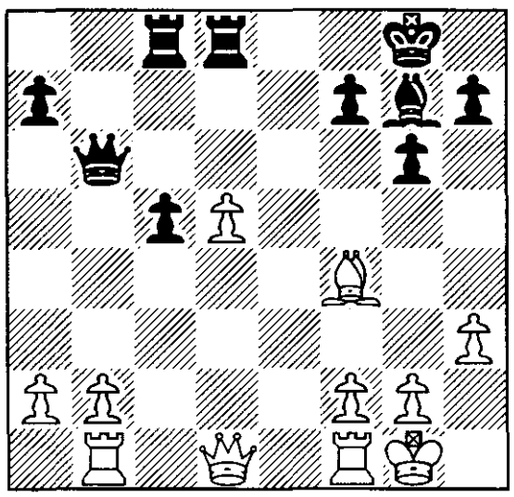
18...♖fd8!?

After 18...♕d6 Black quickly regains his pawn, but he still has some problems to solve after 19 ♗e3 or 19 ♗g5!? h6 20 ♗e3.

19 ♗f4

19 ♗g5?! is harmless after 19...♖d7 20 ♕g4 ♕b7 21 ♖fd1 h5, when a draw was agreed in Ibragimov-De Firmian, Reykjavik open 1994. Once White moves his queen Black will play 22...♗d4 and

then take the d-pawn with his queen.



19...♕b7!

An important improvement which halts the progress of the dangerous pawn. Both 19...♖d7 20 d6 ♗f8 21 ♕g4 and 19...♕a6 20 d6 ♖d7 21 ♕d5 have not worked out well for Black in practice.

20 d6 ♗f8 21 ♕d2

21 ♕d3 looks more active, when after 21...♗xd6 22 ♗xd6 ♖c6 23 ♖fd1 Black has a choice between:

a) Not 23...♕b6? 24 ♗xc5.

b) 23...♖cxd6 24 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 c4, when numerous games have continued 26 ♖d2 c3! 27 ♖c2 ♕e4 28 ♖bc1 cxb2 29 ♖xb2 and Black probably has just about enough for a draw. However, I prefer Shalimov's 26 ♖dd1!, keeping the pawns on for the time being. In principle, the two rooks should be better than the queen in this type of position. Certainly it is no fun at all for Black to play.

c) 23...♕d7 and now:

c1) 24 ♕b5 ♖xd6 25 ♕xd7 ♖8xd7 26 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 and Black is equal – Stohl.

c2) 24 ♕a3! ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 26 ♕xa7 ♖e8 27 ♕a5 ♖e2 28 ♕c3 ♕b6! 29 a4 c4 30 ♖f1 ♕b3 31 ♕xb3 cxb3 32 ♖b1 ♖e4, as in Komarov-Leko, Yugoslavia 1997, and now 33 a5 ♖a4 34 ♖d1 with the idea of ♖d8+ and ♖b8 offers White winning chances in this technical endgame.

21...♗xd6 22 ♗xd6 ♖c6 23 ♖fd1 ♕a6!

Not 23...♖dxd6?! 24 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 transposing to variation 'a' above.

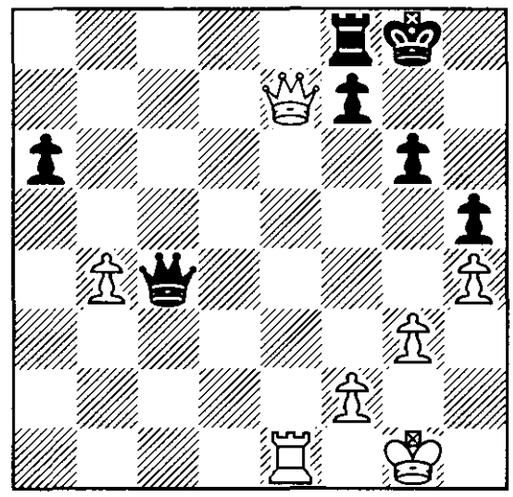
24 ♕g5 ♖dxd6

24...♖cxd6? would be a blunder due to 25 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 26 ♖xd8+ ♔g7 27 a3.

25 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 26 ♕xc5 ♕xa2! 27 ♖e1 ♖d8 28 b4 a6 29 ♕g5 ♖f8

Not 29...♕d5?? 30 ♖e8+ and wins.

30 h4 ♕c4 31 ♕e7 h5 32 g3



White still has slightly the more active position, but Topalov manages to negate this and eventually secure the draw, despite a slight hiccup along the way.

32...♖c8 33 ♖d1 ♕c6 34 ♖d6 ♕a8 35 ♕e1 ♕b7 36 ♕d2 ♖e8 37 ♕c3 ♖c8 38 ♕d2 ♖e8 39 ♖d5 ♕c6 40 ♔h2 ♕f6 41 ♖d4 ♕c6 42 ♖d6 ♕f3 43 ♕d4 ♕e4 44 ♕c3 ♕b7 45 ♖c6 ♕b5 46 ♖f6 ♖e7 47 ♕c8+ ♖e8 48 ♕xa6 ♕xb4 49 ♕a2 ♖e6 50 ♖xe6 fxe6 51 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 52 ♕d7+ ♔f6 53 ♕c6+ ♔g7 54 ♕d5 ♕c3 55 ♔g2 ♕f6 56 ♕d7+ ♔g8 57 ♕c7 ♕e6 58 ♕f4 ♕c6+ 59 ♔f1 ♕e6 60 ♕e3 ♕c4+ 61 ♔e1 ♕c2 62 ♔f1 ♕d1+ 63 ♔g2 ♕d5+ 64 f3 ♕a2+ 65 ♔h3 ♕b1 66 g4 hxg4+ 67 fxg4 ♕f1+ 68 ♔g3 ♕f6 69 ♕c5 ♕e6 70 ♕c3 ♕e4 ½-½

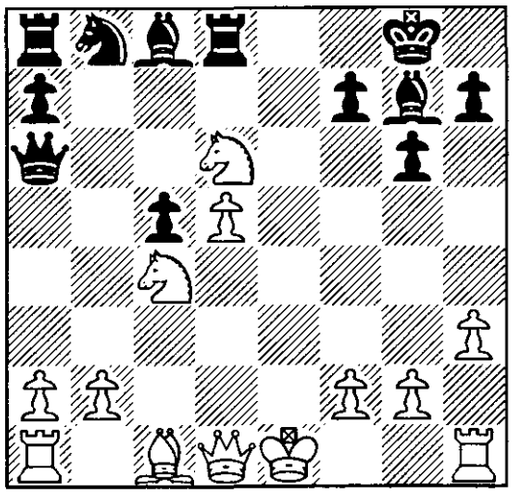
Game 6

Lalic-Marin

European Team Ch., Haifa 1989

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 d6 4 ♘c3 g6 5

e4 ♗g7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 h3 e6 8 ♗d3 exd5 9 cxd5 b5 10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘fd2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕a6 14 ♘2c4 ♖d8!?



This was a new move at the time. Black tries to keep the tension, while keeping an eye on the d5-pawn.

15 ♕e2

Attempting to refute Black's play. However, 15 ♗f4 is more solid, when after 15...♘d7 16 0-0 ♘b6 17 ♘xb6 (or 17 ♘c4 ♕b7 18 d6?! ♕e4!) 17...♕xb6 (or 17...axb6 18 ♕d2) 18 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 19 ♖b1 we have transposed to the previous main game. With this move order White can also consider 19 d6!?, sacrificing the b-pawn. Estremera Panos-Serra Olives, Andorra 2000, continued 19...♗xb2 (19...♕xb2 20 d7 also looks quite promising for White) 20 ♖b1 c4 21 d7 ♖c6 22 ♗g5 f6 23 ♗e3 ♕b5 24 ♖xb2 and Black resigned due to 24...♕xb2 25 ♕d5+ and 26 ♕xc6.

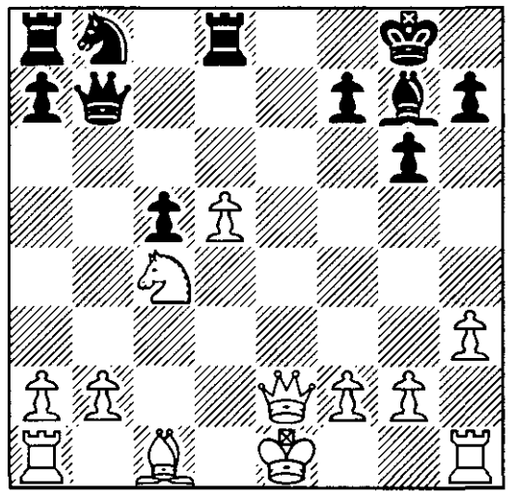
15...♗b7!

Neither 15...♖xd6?! 16 ♕e8+ ♗f8 17 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♕xc8 ♕xd5 19 0-0 nor 15...♗f8?! 16 ♗f4 (or even 16 ♘e8!?) is playable for Black.

16 ♘xb7

In the early days of this system several White players were tempted by 16 ♕e7 ♖d7 17 ♕e8+ ♗f8, only to find that their position was over-stretched, e.g. 18 ♗e3 ♗xd5; 18 0-0 ♖xd6 19 ♘xd6 ♕xd6; or, most brutally of all, 18 ♘xb7 ♕xc4 19 ♘d6 ♕xd5 20 ♘e4 ♕d1 mate J.Gomez-Izeta, Toledo 1991.

16...♕xb7



17 ♘e3

It looks clumsy to block the bishop, but this move is the only way to defend the d-pawn. After 17 ♗e3 ♖xd5! 18 0-0 ♘c6 Black has a level game according to Dautov.

17...♕b4+

In his notes to this game Marin suggested that 17...♘d7 would have equalised here, and this view was borne out in the game Olsen-Olesen, Copenhagen 1995, which finished 18 0-0 ♘b6 19 ♖d1 ♖d7 20 ♖b1 ♘xd5 21 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 22 ♗e3 ½-½. I cannot see any way for White to hang on to his d-pawn after 17...♘d7, and 17...♘a6 with the idea of 18...♘b4 is also a perfectly reasonable way to play.

18 ♕d2

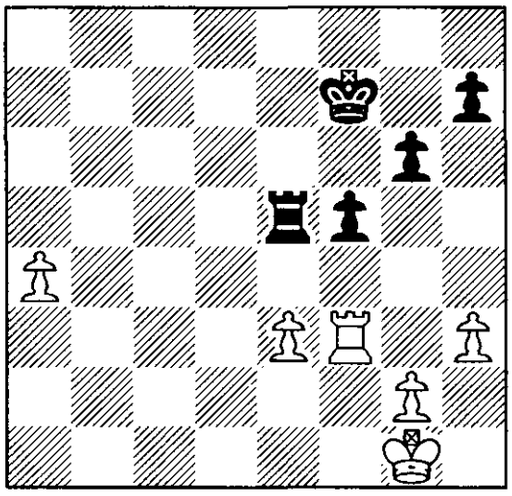
Black is far too active after 18 ♗d2?! ♕xb2 19 0-0 ♘d7.

18...♘a6?!

Marin suggests 18...♘c6 19 0-0 ♕xd2 20 ♗xd2 ♘e7 'with equality'. Either the d5-pawn or the b2-pawn must drop off.

19 0-0 ♕xd2 20 ♗xd2 ♗xb2 21 ♖ab1 ♗d4 22 ♖b7 ♘b4 23 ♗xb4 cxb4 24 ♖xb4 ♗xe3 25 fxe3 ♖xd5 26 ♖b7 ♖f8

27 ♖xa7 ♖e5 28 ♖f3 f5 29 a4 ♖f7 30 ♖xf7 ♔xf7



31 ♔f2

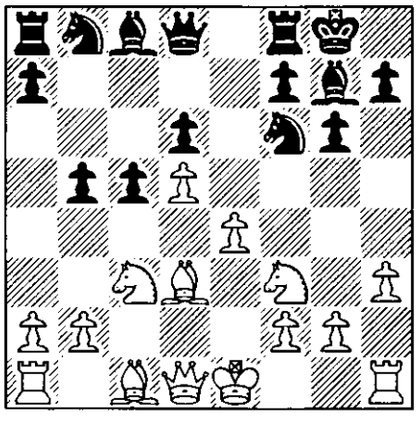
31 ♖f2, intending ♖a2 to place the rook behind the passed pawn, would have kept White's winning chances alive. After the game move Black is able to hold the draw without too much difficulty.

31...♖c5 32 g4 ♔e6 33 gxf5+ gxf5 34 ♖f4 ♖c3 35 ♔f3 ♖a3 36 ♖b4 ♔e5 37 ♖b5+ ♔f6 38 ♖a5 ♖a2 39 ♖a8 ♖h2 40 ♖f8+ ♔g6 41 ♔g3 ♖a2 42 ♖a8 ♔f6 43 a5 ♖a4 44 a6 ♔g7 45 a7 h6 46 ♔f2 ♖a2+ 47 ♔e1 ♔h7 48 ♔d1 ♔g7 49 ♔c1 ♔h7 50 ♔b1 ♖a6 51 ♔b2 ♔g7 52 h4 h5 53 ♔c3 ♖a4 54 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 55 ♔d3 ♔h7 56 ♖f8 ♖xa7 57 ♖xf5 ♖a3+ 58 ♔e2 ♖a4 59 ♖f4 ♖a2+ 60 ♔f3 ♔g6 61 ♖d4 ♖h2 62 ♖d6+ ♔g7 63 ♔g3 ♖h1 64 ♖d5 ♔g6 65 ♖g5+ ♔h6 66 ♖f5 ♖g1+ 67 ♔f2 ♖a1 68 e4 ♖a2+ 69 ♔g3 ♖a4 70 e5 ♖a3+ 71 ♔f2 ♖a2+ 72 ♔e3 ♖a3+ 73 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 74 ♔c3 ♖a3+ 75 ♔b4 ♖e3 76 ♖f6+ ♔g7 77 ♖f5 ♔g6 78 ♖g5+ ♔f7 79 ♔c5 ♖e4 ½-½

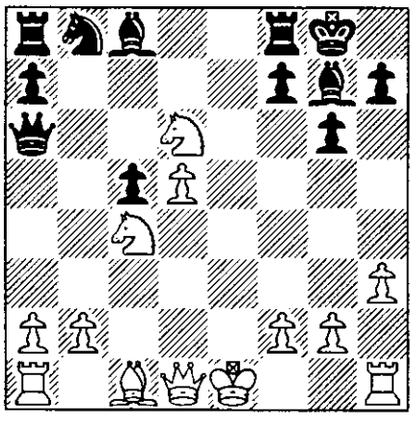
Summary
In this chapter we have seen some of the most critical lines in the Modern Benoni. If Black can get away with 9...b5 then he should almost certainly play it as it is the move he would always like to achieve. However, it is not clear whether he can achieve full and complete equality after either 10 ♘xb5 or 10 ♗xb5. In Game 4 Black still has to find a complete defence after 10 ♘xb5 ♖e8 11 ♗g5, while after 10 ♗xb5 a long, forcing variation arises in which Black has very few winning chances, as we saw in Game 5.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5 *(D)*

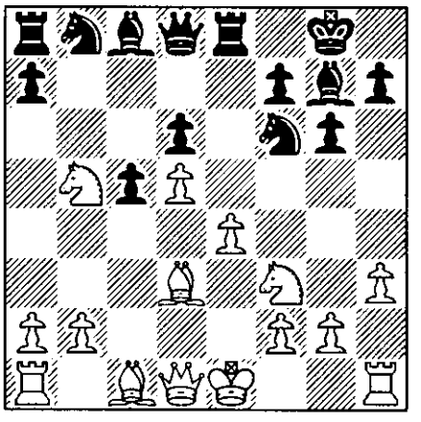
10 ♘xb5
10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘fd2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕a6 14 ♘2c4 *(D)*
14...♘d7 – *Game 5*
14...♖d8 – *Game 6*
10...♖e8 *(D)*
10...♘xe4 – *Game 1*
11 0-0
11 ♘d2 – *Game 3*
11 ♗g5 – *Game 4*
11...♘xe4 – *Game 2*



9...b5

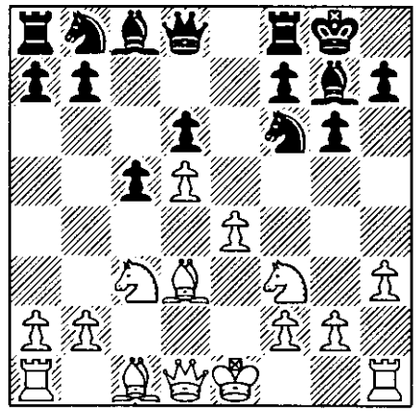


14 ♘2c4



10...♖e8

CHAPTER TWO



Modern Main Line without ...b7-b5 (8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3

In this chapter we shall be considering various alternatives for Black in the modern main line apart from 9...b5 (see the previous chapter). There are two other very popular ways for Black to handle the main line position: the solid 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖e8 (Game 7) and the sharp 9...♖e8 10 a4 c4!? (Games 9 and 10). Neither of these seem to offer full equality according to current theory, but they still offer opportunities to the well prepared Benoni player. Sometimes White does not resist his opponent's queenside ambitions and meets 9...a6 with 10 0-0, allowing 10...b5, and this idea is the subject of Game 8.

We shall also be taking a look at two popular ways in which Black can avoid the modern main line: 6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4 a6 8 a4 ♗g4!? (Game 11) and 6 ♘f3 g6 7 h3 a6 8 a4 ♕e7!? (Game 12).

Game 7
Lutz-Lobron
Baden Baden 1992

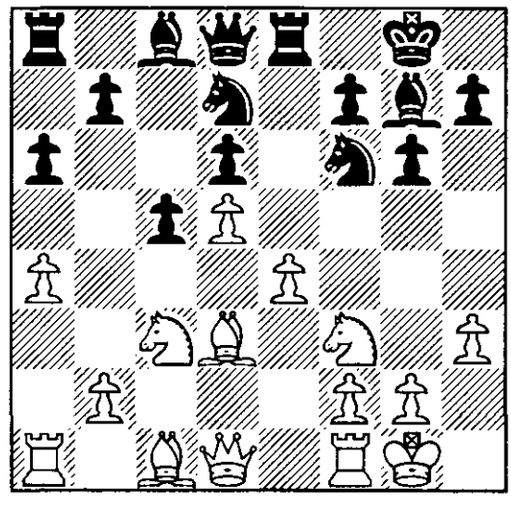
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 h3

8 ♗d3 is careless due to 8...♗g4!, e.g. 9 ♕a4+ ♘fd7 10 ♘d2 0-0 11 0-0 ♘e5 12 ♗b1 ♗d7 13 ♕b3 ♘a6 and Black already had the more pleasant position in Granda Zuniga-Timman, Amsterdam 1996.

8...0-0 9 ♗d3 a6 10 a4

The 'automatic' move, preventing ...b7-b5. 10 0-0 is the subject of the next main game.

10...♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖e8



Thus far Black has followed a very natural-looking development path. Indeed ...a7-a6, ...♘bd7 and ...♖e8 might even be regarded as *the* standard Benoni moves, since they arise in so many different variations. I am loathe to criticise such

theoretically well regarded moves, but in this particular variation they do not really offer much of a challenge to White's set-up. White is able to continue his central build-up virtually unmolested, whilst sooner or later Black will be left wondering exactly how on earth he ever imagined being able to generate any real counterplay, particularly if he is unable to free his cramped position with a few exchanges.

12 ♗f4!

The bishop clearly belongs on this diagonal, bearing down the d6-pawn and supporting a future e4-e5 advance. After 12 ♖e1 ♘e5!? 13 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♗f4 ♖e8 15 ♗h2 b6 16 ♗c4 ♖a7 Black had managed to free his position a little in Henley-Rohde, New York 1990.

12...♕e7

It is always difficult to decide how to defend the d-pawn in such situations, since both e7 and c7 have potential drawbacks for the queen. In principle, I would usually prefer e7 to c7, but the queen really belongs on d8! After 12...♕c7 White quickly took advantage of the unfortunate position of the queen on the c-file in Vyzmanavin-Titkov, Riga 1988: 13 ♖e1 ♖b8 14 ♖c1 b6 15 b4 ♘h5 16 ♗h2 ♘e5 17 ♗e2 ♕e7 18 b5 a5 19 ♕d2 and Black's queenside play was dead and buried, leaving White a free hand to arrange an eventual e4-e5 breakthrough.

13 ♗h2!

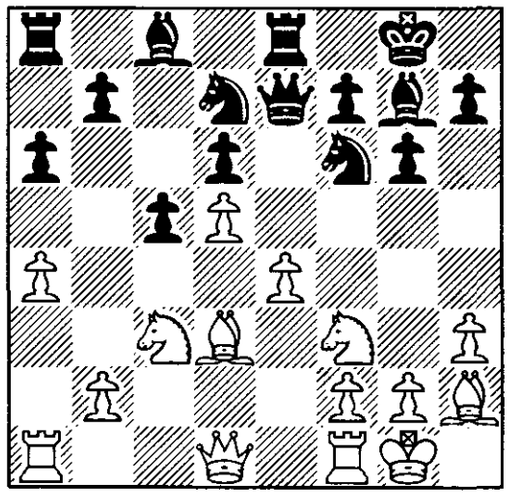
see following diagram

A very pleasant prophylactic move, preventing the bishop from being hassled by ...♘h5. After 13 ♖e1 ♘h5 14 ♗h2 ♘e5 Black would at least be able to ease his cramped position slightly with one or two exchanges.

13...h6

After 13...♘h5 Stohl gives 14 g4 ♘hf6 15 ♖e1 when White is nearly ready to play e4-e5. However, Black may be able to muddy the waters here with 15...h5 16 g5 ♘h7, as White's kingside is rather shaky. Instead of 14 g4, 14 ♘d2-c4 looks more solid to me.

The text move creates a square on h7 for the knight in order to bring the bishop to bear on e5, but this knight has a very sad future.



14 ♖e1 ♘h7 15 a5 ♖b8

Black cannot free himself with 15...♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 due to 17 f4 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 with e4-e5 to follow (Stohl).

16 ♕c2 ♘hf8

Something has usually gone wrong if you have to play moves like this.

17 ♖ad1

The final preparation for e4-e5.

17...b5

This is usually Black's standard counter in the Benoni, but here the rook on b6 does not link up with any of his other pieces.

18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 ♖a1!

White very calmly takes aim at the a6-pawn.

19...♕f6 20 ♘d2! ♘e5

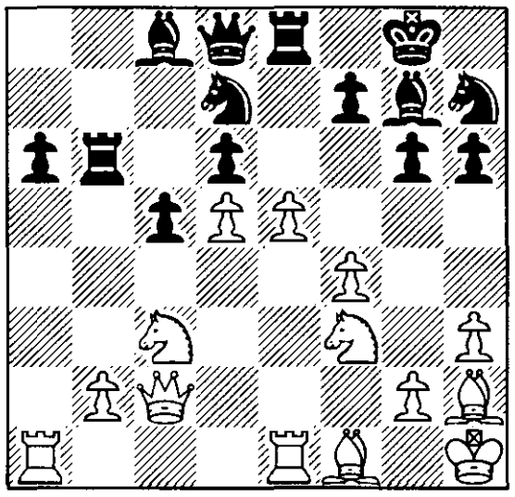
The knight pops its nose out, but it will soon be forced to retreat. Black is simply running out of sensible moves.

21 ♗f1 ♕e7 22 f4 ♘ed7 23 ♘f3

We are now back at the position after 19 ♖a1 except that White has secured his

bishop on f1 and has managed to send his f-pawn from f2 to f4. Black is left treading water until such time as White feels ready for e4-e5.

23...♘h7 24 ♔h1 ♕d8 25 e5!



This is practically White's ideal position in the Benoni. He has avoided exchanges, prevented any counterplay whatsoever and now gets in the crushing e4-e5. The rest is just party time for White.

25...dxe5 26 fxe5 ♘g5 27 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 28 ♘e4 ♕d8 29 e6 fxe6 30 ♘d6 ♖xd6 31 ♗xd6 exd5 32 ♕xg6 ♘f633 ♗xc5 ♗e6 34 ♗d3 ♗f7 35 ♕f5 36 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 37 ♗d4 ♗e6 38 ♕f3 ♕d8 39 ♖f1 ♘e8 40 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 1-0

Having reached the time control, Black realised that his position was hopeless after 41 ♕f4.

Game 8

Zhu Chen-Oll

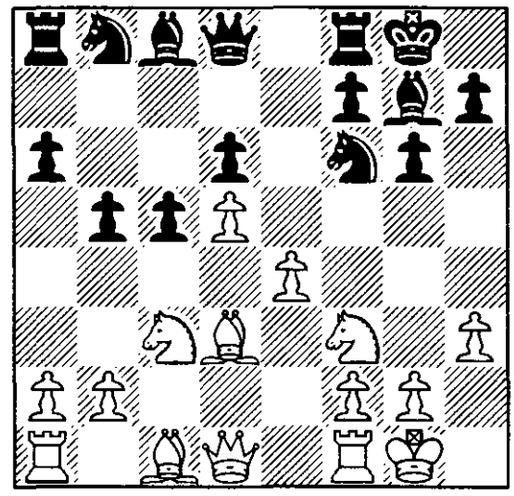
Beijing 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 a6 10 0-0

Despite the fact that 10 a4 looks so natural, this move is surprisingly popular. White aims for rapid mobilisation in order to try and force through e4-e5.

10...b5

The actual move order in the game was the very commonly seen 7...a6 8 h3 b5 9 ♗d3 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0.



11 ♗f4

One point of White's idea is to prevent the black knight from coming to d7 for the time being.

11...♖e8

There is no need to hurry with 11...b4, e.g. 12 ♘a4 ♗d7 13 a3 ♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♗xa4? 15 ♕xa4 bxa3 16 ♖xa3 ♘fd7 17 b4! and White had dismantled the black queenside in Zsu.Polgar-Sax, Aruba 1992. It is worth noting that 11...♕b6 12 a4! c4 13 ♗e2 b4 14 a5 ♕c7 15 ♘a4 also favours White, while after 11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♗b7 14 ♕d2 ♕b6 15 b4!? cxb3 16 axb3 White enjoyed slightly the more active position in Foisor-Suba, Romanian Championship 1987.

12 ♖e1 ♖a7!?

An unusual idea, planning to swing the rook over to e7. The problem with 12...♕b6 is that White can hit back on the queenside with 13 a4! c4 14 ♗f1 b4 15 a5! ♕c7 16 ♘a4 with a promising position. Once Black has played ...c5-c4 he always has to be seriously concerned about White using the d4-square as a launch pad for his pieces.

13 ♕d2

White usually takes time out to play 13 a3, e.g. 13...♖ae7 and now:

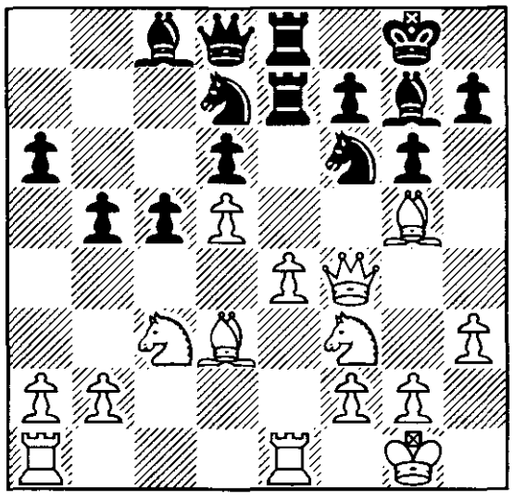
a) 14 ♕d2 ♕b6 15 ♖e2 ♘bd7 16 ♖ae1

♘h5 17 ♗e3 ♗d4 18 ♗c2 ♗xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♘e5 20 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 and a draw was agreed in Piket-Kamsky, Amsterdam 1996; White has no chance of ever being able to force through e4-e5.

b) 14 ♕c2 ♘h5 15 ♗h2 ♕b6 16 ♖ad1 ♘d7 with a solid position for Black in P.Schmidt-Kraai, German Bundesliga 1999.

c) Since there is no real chance of forcing through e4-e5 White should probably switch to a queenside strategy with 14 ♖c1! ♕b6 15 b4! ♘bd7 16 ♕d2 with a small plus in Foisor-Pigusov, Moscow 1987. If Black ever plays ...c5xb4 or ...c5-c4 then White will gain access to the important d4-square.

13...♖ae7 14 ♗g5 ♘bd7 15 ♕f4



The pin on the f6-knight looks dangerous, but White soon discovers that he is banging his head against a solid brick wall.

15...♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♘h5 17 ♕d2 b4 18 ♘d1 ♘f6 19 ♘h2?

White should continue the dance with 19 ♕f4, when neither side is likely to be able to make much more progress.

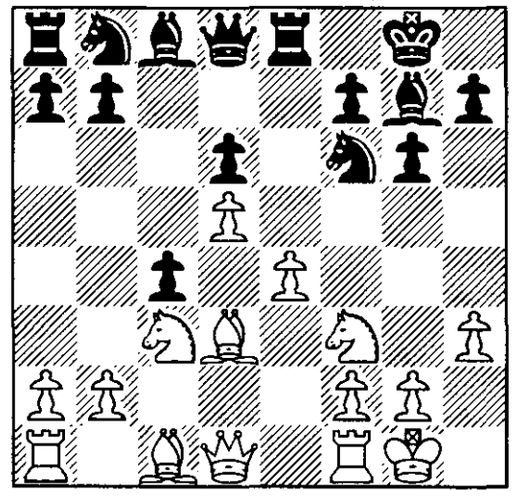
19...♘xe4 20 ♗xe7 ♘xd2 21 ♗xd8 ♘d3!

White probably missed this move, after which he loses material.

22 ♘e3 ♘xe1 23 ♘c4 ♘c2 24 ♖c1 ♘d4 25 ♗f1 ♘xc4 26 ♗c7 ♘b5 27 ♗b8 ♗d7 0-1

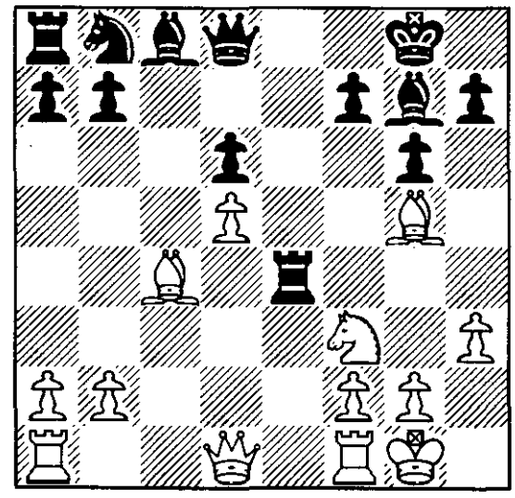
Game 9
J.Horvath-C.Horvath
Bischwiller open 1993

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♖e8 10 0-0 c4!?



This is a far more active idea than we saw in Game 7. Black tries to cut across his opponent's plans straightaway, hoping that the exchange of the white e-pawn for his own c-pawn will leave the d5-pawn exposed. White can either capture the pawn with 11 ♗xc4, as in this game, or play the calm 11 ♗c2, hoping to be able to utilise the d4-square to good effect (see the next game).

11 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♗g5



13...♗f6

This looks more precise than 13 ♗d3 ♖e8 14 ♗g5 ♕a5! (14...♗f6 transposes to the main game) 15 ♖e1 ♗d7! 16 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 17 ♕e1 ♕xe1+ 18 ♖xe1 ♘d7 19 ♗b5 ♘f6 20 ♗c4 and a draw was agreed in Ribli-Gschnitzer, German Bundesliga 1991.

Here both 13...♕b6 and 13...♕a5 can be met by 14 ♘d2! ♖e8 15 ♖e1, when White has excellent attacking chances along the e-file, especially if he can arrange ♘e4. The ungainly looking 13...♕f8 may be in fact be Black's best chance. In this way he keeps an eye on both the back rank and the d6-pawn, whilst maintaining the key 'Benoni bishop'. A couple of moves have been tried for White in this position:

a) 14 ♕c2 ♖e8 15 ♖ae1 ♗f5!? (it seems more natural to develop the bishop first if possible; 15...♘d7 16 ♗b5 ♖xe1 17 ♖xe1 proved unpleasant for Black in Szeberenyi-Yu Mingyuan, Budapest 2000) 16 ♕b3 ♘d7 17 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♕xb7 ♘b6, when at the cost of a pawn Black had managed to activate his minor pieces in Piket-Ljubojevic, Monaco (7th match-game) 1994.

b) 14 ♗d3 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 h6 16 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 17 ♗f4 ♕d8 18 ♕d2 g5 e19 ♗g3 ♘a6 20 ♖e1 f5 21 ♕c2 f4 22 ♗h7+ ♔h8 23 ♗h2 ♗d7 24 h4 ♕f6 25 hxg5 hxg5 with a very unclear position in Lukey-Sandler, Melbourne 1994.

14 ♗d3 ♖e8 15 ♕a4!

Prior to this game 15 ♕d2 was generally played, but the idea of swinging the queen over to h4 is much more dangerous.

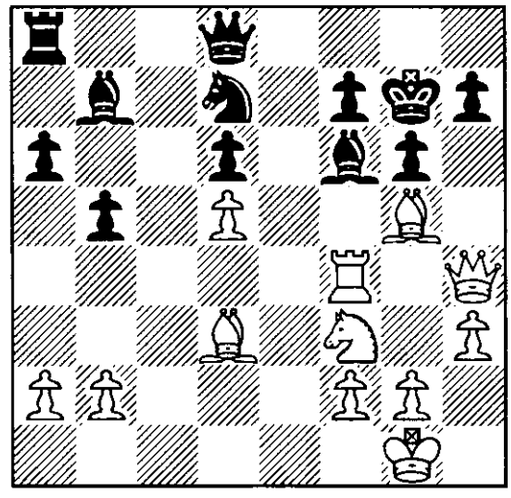
15...♘d7 16 ♕h4 a6

16...♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 ♘f6 18 f4 ♔g7 19 f5 gave White a frightening attack in Gallego-Zelcic, San Sebastian 1991.

17 ♖ae1 ♖xe1 18 ♖xe1 b5 19 ♖e4 ♗b7 20 ♖f4 ♔g7 21 ♕h6+ ♔g8 22 ♕h4

White is free to repeat moves as Black can hardly diverge.

22...♔g7



In *The Complete Benoni* Lev Psakhis assesses this position as equal on the basis of 23 ♕h6+ ♔g8 24 ♕h4 ½-½ P.Cramling-Wedberg, Stockholm 1990. However, it may just be lost for Black after Horvath's new move:

23 ♘d4!!

A brilliant sacrifice which cannot be accepted: 23...♗xg5 24 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 25 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 26 ♕xg6+ ♔e5 27 ♘e6 leads to mate in two. White also has the lethal threat of 24 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 25 ♘f5+ gxf5 26 ♕h6+ ♔g8 27 ♗xf6, so his opponent is forced to stop the infiltration on h6, although this hardly solves his problems.

23...h5 24 ♗xg6!

One sacrifice leads to another.

24...♔xg6

Or 24...fxg6 25 ♘e6+ and White wins the black queen.

25 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 26 ♖f5!

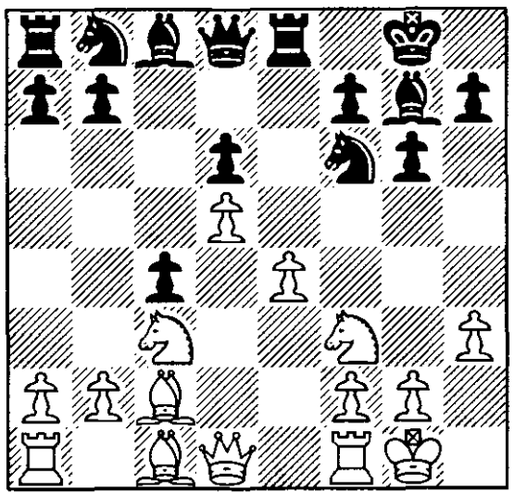
Very calm play. There is no way for Black to prevent 27 ♕g5+ and 28 ♖xf6 since if the knight moves then 27 ♕xh5+ and ♖xf7+ is curtains.

25...♔g7 27 ♕g5+ ♔f8 28 ♖xf6 ♕e7 29 ♘f5 ♕e1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 31 f4 ♕xd5 32 ♖h6 1-0

A wonderful game (or piece of preparation?) by Horvath which deserved more than a single point.

Game 10
Kulcsar-Andics
Hungarian Championship 1991

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♖e8 10 0-0 c4 11 ♗c2



11...b5

The sharpest move, attempting to set up a bind on the queenside. After 11...♘a6 12 ♗e3 ♗d7 13 a3 ♖c8 14 ♗d4 ♘c5 15 ♖e1 ♘h5 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 e5, as in Zsu.Polgar-Tolnai, Hungary 1991, or 11...♗d7 12 ♗f4 ♕b6 13 ♖b1 ♘a6 14 a3 ♘c5 15 ♖e1 ♖ac8 16 ♕d2 a5 17 e5, as in Krasenkov-Honfi, Passau 1993, White manages to achieve his central breakthrough relatively unmolested.

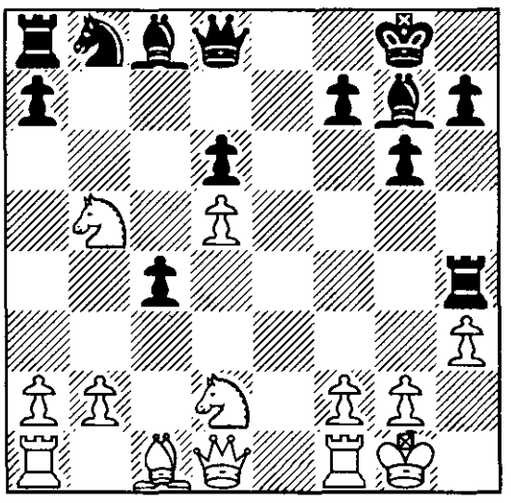
12 ♘xb5

The critical test of Black's idea, although after 12 a3 a6 (or 12...♘a6 13 ♗e3 ♗d7 14 ♖e1 ♕c7 15 ♗f4 ♘c5 16 e5, as in Dokuchaev-Notkin, Moscow 1991) 13 ♗f4 ♗b7 14 ♖e1 ♕b6 15 ♕d2 ♘bd7 16 ♖ad1 ♘c5 17 e5 White had still achieved his desired e4-e5 advance in Gurieli-Wedberg, Berlin 1997.

12...♘xe4 13 ♗xe4

13 ♖e1 leads to great complications after 13...♘xf2!? (13...♗a6 14 a4 ♗xb5 15 axb5 favoured White in Dreev-Wedberg, New York 1991) 14 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 15 ♘c7 ♕e7 16 ♕e1 ♕xc7 17 ♕e8+ ♗f8 18 ♗h6 ♘xh3+! 19 gxh3 ♕c5+ and here instead of 20 ♔f1??, when Black could have won with 20...♗xh3+ 21 ♔e2 ♕c8! in Magerramov-Totsky, Moscow 1991, White should have played 20 ♔h1 ♘d7 21 ♘g5 with a very unclear position according to Psakhis, although I still prefer Black after 21...♕f2! 22 ♗e4 ♗b7! 23 ♕xd7 ♗xh6 24 ♕xb7 ♖f8, since after 25 ♘f3 f5 Black regains the piece.

13...♖xe4 14 ♘d2 ♖h4



15 ♕e2?

The critical test of Black's idea is 15 ♖e1 ♗a6 16 a4 ♗xb5 17 axb5 and now:

a) 17...♖d4?! 18 b6! ♘d7 (not 18...♕xb6? 19 ♖e8+ ♗f8 20 ♕e2 with the powerful threat of 21 ♕e7, e.g. 20...♔g7 21 ♘f3 ♖xd5 22 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 23 ♗h6+ ♔g8 24 ♕e8 mate) 19 bxa7 ♖xd5 20 ♕f3 ♖d3 21 ♕b7 d5 22 ♘f3 ♘c5 23 ♕c6 led to a quick victory for White in Krasenkow-Bu Xiangzhi, Shenyang 1999: 23...♘b3 (23...♘e4 24 ♗f4!? ♗xb2 25 ♖a6 is also pretty grim for Black) 24 ♗g5 f6 25 ♕e6+ ♔h8 26 ♘e5 ♕f8 27 ♘d7 ♘c5 28 ♘xf8 ♘xe6 29 ♘xe6 1-0.

b) In a later round of the same tournament, Bu Xiangzhi attempted to improve on his previous play with 17...♘d7 18 ♘e4 ♕b6 19 ♖a6 ♕xb5 20 ♖xd6 ♘e5 in Wu Shaobin-Bu Xiangzhi, Shenyang 1999, but this still looks pretty

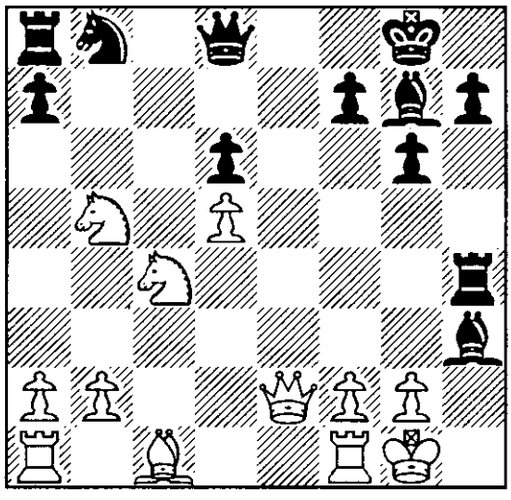
ropy to me. Krasenkow gives 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 ♖xf6 ♘d3 23 ♖e7 with a clear plus for White.

15...♗xh3!

This probably came a something of a shock to White.

16 ♘xc4

White was probably afraid for his king after 16 gxh3 ♕g5+ 17 ♔h2 ♗e5+ 18 f4 ♗xf4+ 19 ♖xf4 ♕xf4+ 20 ♔g2, although he may be able to hang on.



16...♗xg2!

The desperado bishop strikes again.

17 ♔xg2 ♕d7

The threat of ...♕h3+ regains the piece.

18 ♕f3

Or 18 ♖h1 ♖xh1 19 ♔xh1 ♕xb5.

18...♖g4+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xc4 20 a4 ♖xa4 21 ♖xa4 ♕xb5 22 ♕d1 ♘d7 23 ♖e1 ♘c5 24 ♖h4 ♘d3 25 ♖e2 ♘xc1 0-1

Game 11
Van Wely-Topalov
Antwerp 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 e4 a6!?

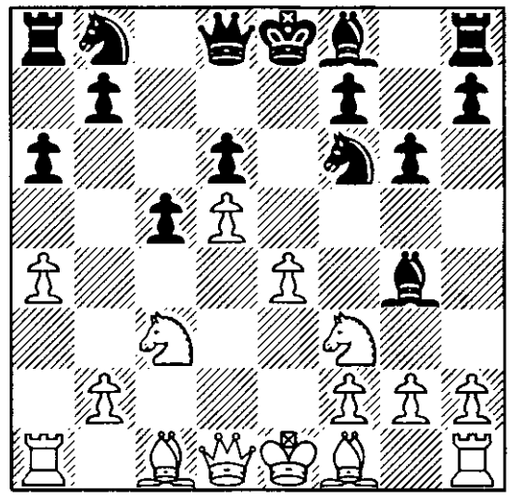
One of the main points of this tricky move order is to avoid the modern main line. Black delays the development of his dark-squared bishop and takes immediate action. Note that 7...♗g4?! is premature due to 8 ♕a4+ or 8 ♕b3.

8 a4

8 h3 b5 transposes to Game 8.

8...♗g4!?

Of course, 8...♗g7 allows White to reach Game 7 with 9 ♗d3.



9 ♕b3

This is the critical test of Black's idea. After 9 ♗e2 Black can play 9...♗xf3 with an almost certain transposition to Chapter 3, while 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 ♗g7 is also fine for Black.

9...♗xf3 10 ♕xb7

White takes up the challenge. 10 gxf3 looks very unnatural, e.g. 10...♕c7 11 ♗g2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♗g7 13 f4 0-0 14 ♖d1 ♖ab8 with at least equality for Black in the game Abdulla-Ward, British Championship, Scarborough 1999.

10...♘bd7

Two other moves have been tried here:

a) 10...♘xe4? was harshly treated in Van Wely-Guseinov, European Team Championship, Pula 1997: 11 gxf3! ♘xc3 12 ♕xa8 ♗g7 13 ♖a3! 0-0 14 bxc3 ♖e8+ 15 ♔d1 ♕f6 16 ♗e2 1-0. Not the sort of game to make you very popular with your team-mates!

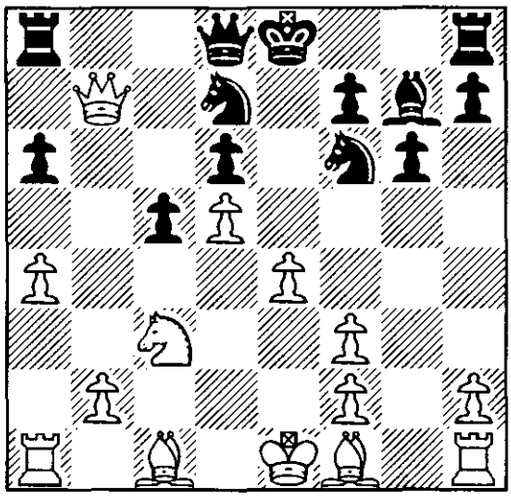
b) 10...♗xg2!? 11 ♗xg2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 (after 12 ♕c6? ♗e7 White's queen in sin trouble) and now:

b1) After 12...♗g7 13 ♗f4 Black had serious problems with his d-pawn in Psakhis-S.Kovacevic, Metz 1994.

b2) 12...♕b8!? 13 ♕c6 ♗g7 14 ♗f4 ♔e7 (now White must be careful not to lose his queen) 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♖fe1 led to tremendous complications in Komarov-Foisor, Lyon 1995.

b3) 12...♗e7 13 f4 0-0 14 e5 (14 a5 c4!? gives Black an active game) 14...dxe5 15 d6 ♗xd6 16 ♕xa8 ♕xa8 17 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 18 a5!? (18 fxe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗f4 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♖a7 21 ♖ae1 ♔g7 22 ♖e2 ♖b7 was more than satisfactory for Black in Murdzia-Yakovich, Swidnica 1999) 18...♖e8 19 ♖a4 ♔g7 20 ♖d1 ♖e6 21 ♔g2 exf4 22 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 23 ♖xf4 ♘e5 24 ♘e4 with a very messy endgame in Crouch-Emms, British Championship, Millfield 2000.

11 gxf3 ♗g7



12 ♗f4?!

Van Wely criticises this innovation, preferring the older 12 ♕c6, although Black still achieved plenty of play in Douven-Psakhis, Groningen open 1993, after 12...♕b8 13 ♗xa6?! (Psakhis suggests 13 a5, creating a retreat square for the queen on a4, when Black still has a lot of work to do to justify his pawn sacrifice) 13...0-0 14 ♕b7 (or 14 ♗e2 ♖a5! - Psakhis) 14...♘e5 15 ♕xb8 ♘xf3+ 16 ♔f1 ♖fxb8 17 ♗e2 ♘d4. Even though the queens have been exchanged, Black has more than enough play for the pawn. Having been fortunate enough to observe this game at Groningen, I decided to try this line myself in a later round of the same event and my opponent chose to retreat the queen straightaway with 12 ♕b3, although after 12...♘h5 13 ♕d1 Black would have had a tremendous grip on the dark squares if he had chosen 13...♕h4! in Finegold-Kinsman, Groningen open 1993.

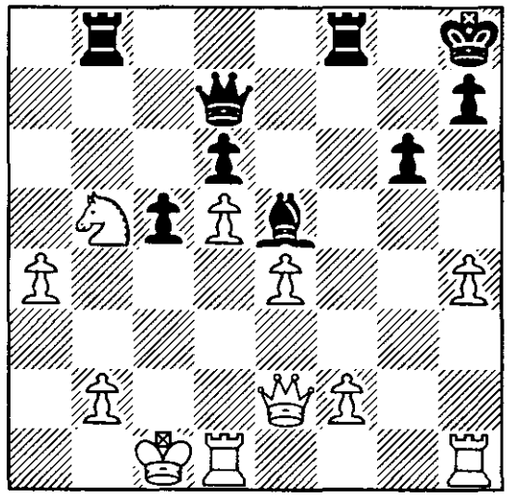
12...♖b8 13 ♕xa6 ♘h5

Van Wely suggests 13...♖xb2!? 14 ♘b5 0-0 15 ♗xd6 ♘h5!?, but it is always much easier to give away all of your pieces in analysis than in a real game!

14 ♗c1 0-0 15 ♗e2 ♗e5 16 h4 ♘f4 17 ♗b5 f5

Possibly over-elaborate. Van Wely reckons that Black has good attacking chances after 17...c4 18 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 20 ♕xc4 ♖xb2. It is hard to imagine how the white king can reach a safe haven.

18 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 19 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 20 ♕e2 ♗e5 21 ♘b5 ♔h8 22 0-0-0 fxe4 23 fxe4



23...♕d8?

Black could have achieved a Benko Gambit-like position with 23...♖a8 24 ♕c2 ♖fb8, when the white king looks very exposed on the queenside.

24 ♖d3 ♕a5 25 ♖a3 ♕b4 26 f3 c4 27 ♕c2 ♖fc8 28 ♖f1 ♖f8 29 ♔b1 ♖a8 30 ♖c1 ♖f4 31 ♕e2 ♖c8 32 ♘a7 c3 33 ♕b5?

A losing blunder. In fact White could have won with the spectacular 33 ♘xc8!

cxb2 34 ♖cc3! ♗xc3 35 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 36 ♕xb2 ♕xb2+ 37 ♔xb2 ♖xf3 38 ♘xd6 (Van Wely).

33...c2+! 34 ♔a2 ♕d2 35 ♕f1 ♕d4 0-1

Game 12

Garcia Ilundain-Spraggett

Candas open 1992

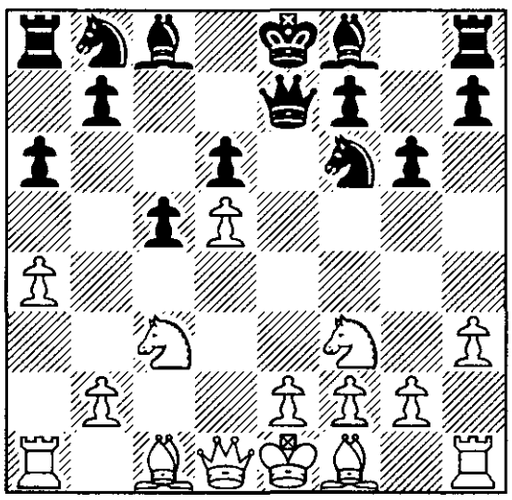
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 h3 a6

The immediate 7...♕e7 leaves the queen looking silly after 8 e4!, whilst 7....♗g7 allows White to reach the modern main line with 8 e4.

8 a4

8 h3 b5 9 ♗d3 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 takes us back to Game 8.

8...♕e7!?



Instead of the normal 8....♗g7, Black cuts across his opponent's intentions, preventing e2-e4. Although Black's queen could turn out to be less than ideally placed on e7, this may be a small price to pay to prevent e2-e4.

9 ♗g5

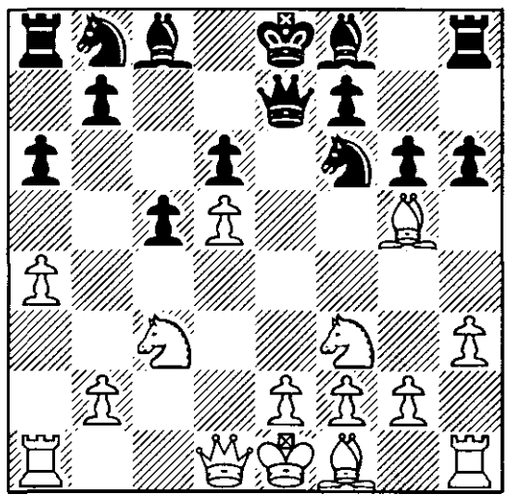
This is the only real way to test Black's idea, although two other moves have also been fairly popular:

a) 9 ♘d2 (White is determined to play e2-e4 come what may, even though this means that he can no longer reach the modern main line) 9...♘bd7 10 e4 (10 ♘c4 here or later can always be met by ...♘e5) 11...♗g7 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♖b8! 13 ♖e1 ♘e8-c7 (Magerramov) and Black will soon be ready to play ...b7-b5. The problem for White is that h2-h3 and ♘d2 do not really fit well together.

b) 9 ♗f4 is also not too scary after 9...♘bd7 10 e3 ♗g7 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♘e8, e.g. 13 e4 ♖b8 14 ♖e1 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗h6 ♘g7 17 f4 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h2 ♗d7 19 ♕d2 ♖fe8 20 ♗f3 ♕d8 21 ♗g5 ♕a5 22 ♕c2 f5 23 g4 ♕b4 24 ♖e2 b5 25 axb5 ♗xb5 ½-½ Greenfeld-Psakhis, Israel 1997.

9...h6

Black adopted an enterprising plan of 9...♘bd7 10 e3 ♘e5!? 11 ♘d2 h6 12 ♗h4 ♗f5 13 e4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♗g6 15 ♗e2 ♗g7 16 0-0 0-0 with a very unclear position in Lalic-Ward, British Championship 1999.



10 ♗h4 ♗g7 11 e3 ♘bd7

11....♗f5 is also reasonable, e.g. 12 ♗d3 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 0-0 14 0-0 ♘bd7 15 e4 rfe8 16 ♖fe1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 ♗h2 ♘e5, as in Komarov-Yudasin, St Petersburg 1997, when White can consider 19 ♕d1!?

12 ♗e2

The immediate 12 ♘d2 is also popular, reserving the option of bringing the bishop to d3 rather than e2. After 12...0-0 13 ♗d3 ♖b8 14 0-0 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘e8 16 ♕c2 ♘e5 17 ♗h7+ ♔h8 18 ♗f5 ♗xf5 19 ♕xf5 b5 20 axb5 axb5 a position of dynamic

balance arose in P.Cramling-Suba, Cala Galdana 1994.

12...0-0 13 0-0 ♘e5 14 ♘d2 g5 15 ♗g3 ♗f5

An improvement over 15...♖e8 16 ♖e1 ♖b8 17 a5 ♗f5 18 e4 ♗g6 19 ♖a4! ♘fd7 20 ♕c2, when White held a slight plus in Karpov-De Firmian, Biel 1990.

16 a5 ♖ae8

For some reason, Spraggett elected to dispense with this move when he reached the same position a couple of years later. After 16...♘fd7 17 ♖a4 ♗h7 18 e4 f5 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♖e1 White was slightly better in San Segundo-Spraggett, Zaragoza 1994, since the black queen is far from comfortable on e7.

17 ♖e1

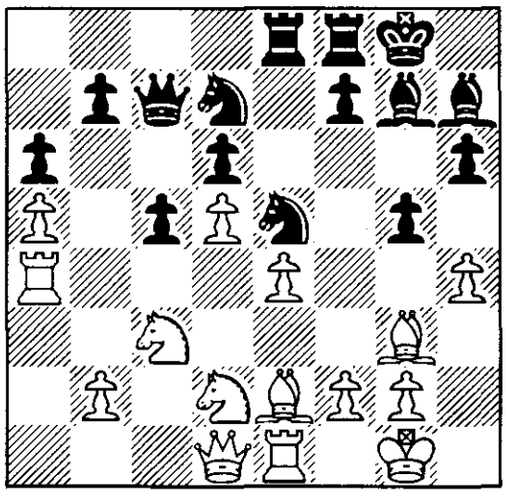
It looks very natural to place the rook opposite the black queen. However, White tried a different idea in C.Hansen-Emms, Copenhagen 1996: 17 ♖a3 ♘fd7 18 ♔h1 ♗h7 19 ♖b3 ♖b8 20 f4 ♘d3 21 ♘c4 ♘b4 22 e4 b5 23 axb6 ♘xb6 24 f5 ♘xc4 25 ♗xc4 ♗e5 26 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 27 ♖a3 ♖b6 28 ♕e2 ♖fb8 29 ♖b1 ♖a8 30 ♖ba1 ♖ab8 31 ♖b1 ♖a8 32 ♖ba1 ♖ab8 and a draw by repetition was agreed.

17...♕c7

With no real danger of a b2-b4 break by White, the black queen seems to stand well on this square.

18 e4 ♗h7 19 ♖a4 ♘fd7 20 h4?!

This looks like a mistake to me, since White is making unnecessary pawn moves on the side on which he stands weaker. With all of Black's pieces lined up on the kingside, White should really be looking to do something on the other wing.



20...♕d8 21 hxg5 hxg5 22 ♖a3 ♗f6!

The start of an excellent regrouping manoeuvre that leaves Black in complete control of the h-file.

23 ♘f1 ♔g7 24 ♘e3 ♖h8 25 ♖a4 ♕c7 26 ♖f1 ♗g6 27 f4 gxf4 28 ♖xf4 ♖h7 29 ♘f5+ ♗xf5 30 exf5 ♖eh8 31 ♕d2 c4!

Suddenly the threat of ...♕c5+ and ...♖h1+ leaves the white position in disarray.

32 ♖axc4

After 32 ♘e4 ♘c5 something horrible will eventually happen on the a7-g1 diagonal, so White decides to try for some complications. However, it does not prove difficult for Black to consolidate his extra material.

32...♖h1+ 33 ♔f2 ♘xc4 34 ♖xc4 ♕xa5 35 ♖g4+ ♔h7 36 ♕e3 ♕c5 37 ♘e4 ♕xe3+ 38 ♔xe3 ♖e8 39 ♔d2 ♖b1 0-1

Summary

In this chapter we have seen why the modern main line has become so popular over the last ten years. Neither the solid-looking 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖e8 (Game 7) nor the sharper 9...♖e8 10 0-0 c4 (Games 9 and 10) seems sufficient for equality, which is why 9...b5 (Chapter 1) is so popular.

If White plays an early ♘f3 then Black has some interesting ways to prevent his opponent from reaching the modern main line, as we saw in Games 11 and 12. However, it should be noted that if White has not played an early ♘f3 then 6 e4 g6 7 h3 practically forces his opponent into the modern main line with 7...♗g7 8 ♘f3.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6

7 ♘f3 *(D)*

7 h3 a6 8 a4 ♕e7 – *Game 12*

7...♗g7

7...a6 8 a4 ♗g4 – *Game 11*

8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 a6

9...♖e8 10 0-0 c4 *(D)*

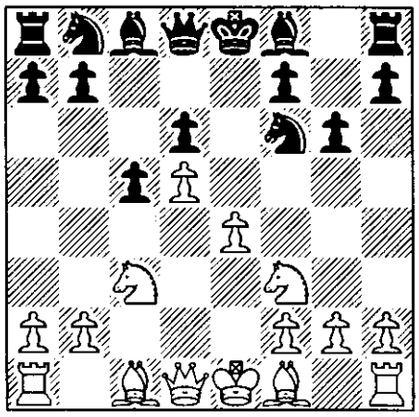
11 ♗xc4 – *Game 9*

11 ♗c2 – *Game 10*

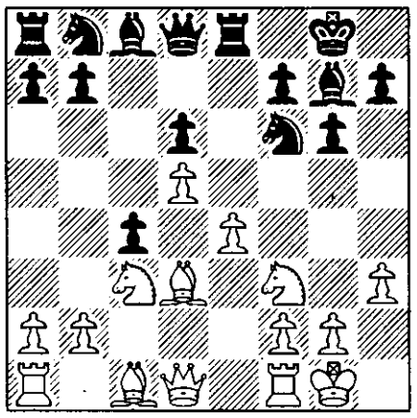
10 a4 *(D)*

10 0-0 – *Game 8*

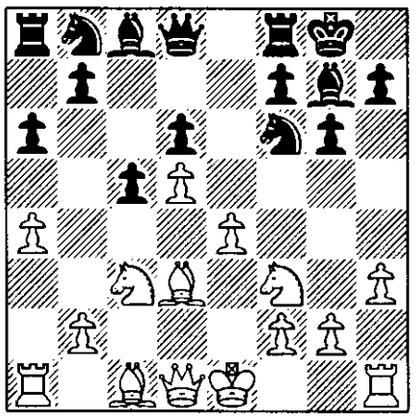
10...♘bd7 – *Game 7*



7 ♘f3

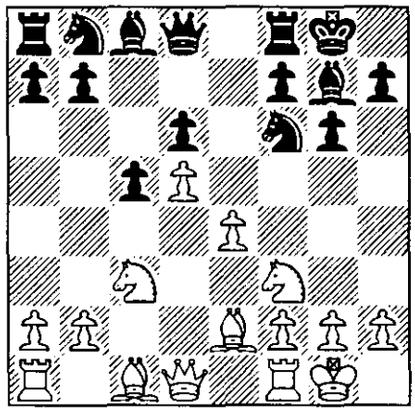


10...c4



10 a4

CHAPTER THREE



Classical Main Line (8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0

We now turn to one of the most well analysed variations of the Modern Benoni, the classical main line, in which White simply develops his kingside in normal fashion and awaits developments. Broadly speaking Black has two ways to counter this: an early ...♗g4 or slower development with either ...♘bd7 or ...♘a6.

We start with 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4. With this sequence Black aims to exchange his light-squared bishop for one of White's minor pieces (preferably the knight on f3) in order to relieve his slightly cramped position. The black knight will then come to d7 and after Black has connected his rooks he will be ready to face the middlegame.

The first two games in this chapter deal with the main line with 11 ♗f4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3, which leads to a complicated positional struggle. This variation is of particular significance since it often arises from the move orders 7...a6 8 a4 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 and 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 a6 8 a4 ♗g7 9 e4 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3.

In Games 15 and 16 Black delays capturing on f3, thereby encouraging White to avoid the exchange of bishop for knight with ♘d2. Finally, in Game 17 White's other 11th moves are considered.

The second half of this chapter is concerned with Black's alternatives to an early ...♗g4. In general these variations are much more complex than those in Games 13-17, since early exchanges are avoided. The downside of not playing ...♗g4 from Black's point of view is that in principle exchanges are in his favour, since he has a slightly cramped position.

The variations without ...♗g4 can be broken down into two main ideas. In Games 18-20 Black opts for ...♖e8 and ...♘bd7, when he will invariably try to launch an attack on the kingside, in particular with ...g6-g5 and perhaps ...g5-g4. Game 21, on the other hand, deals with the more positional ...♖e8 and ...♘a6, when Black will attempt to build up slowly on the queenside.

Game 13
Gligoric-Psakhis
Sarajevo 1986

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7

Nowadays the position after Black's

13th move often arises from the move order 7...a6 8 a4 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 (9 ♕b3 is seen in Chapter 2, Game 11) 9...♗xf3! 10 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 0-0.

8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6

The immediate 9...♗g4 does not really have any independent value, as Black almost always plays ...a7-a6 before too long in any case.

10 a4 ♗g4 11 ♗f4

This is the standard developing move in this position. See Game 17 for White's other moves here.

11...♗xf3

Black is by no means forced to capture the knight immediately, as we shall discover in Games 15 and 16.

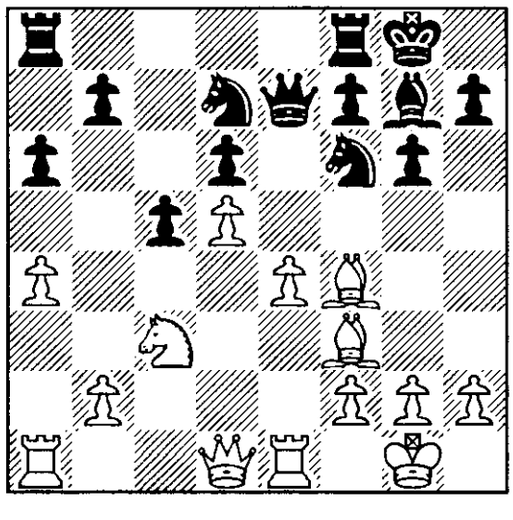
12 ♗xf3 ♕e7

Black has to defend the e-pawn before he can complete his development by bringing out the queen's knight. The queen stands much better here than on c7 in this variation. From the e7-square the queen is able to keep a watchful eye on the e4-e5 break and may exert an important influence on the kingside. Black's position is too passive after 12...♘e8?! 13 ♕d2! ♘d7 14 ♗g5 ♗f6 15 h4!?, as in Zaid-Vladimirov, Alma Ata 1977.

13 ♖e1

13 e5 is considered in the notes to the next main game.

13...♘bd7



Here we have reached one of the most important positions of the classical main line. Black has managed to achieve his objective of exchanging his light-squared bishop for a white knight and has developed all of his remaining pieces. However, he has not quite solved all of his problems yet. White still has a space advantage which he may be able to utilise to force through e4-e5 or sometimes b2-b4 once the rook has moved from a1.

14 a5

White normally plays this move, seizing space on the queenside, sooner or later. Also playable is 14 ♕d2!? h5 (or 14...♖ab8 15 ♗e2!? followed by a4-a5; 14...♖fe8 will most likely transpose to Game 14 after 15 a5) 15 h3 (the immediate 15 ♗e2!? looks more testing to me) 15...c4! 16 ♗e2 ♖ac8 17 a5 ♖fe8 18 ♗f1 ♘h7 19 ♖a4 f5 with good play for Black in Van der Sterren-Psakhis, Tallinn 1987.

14...h5!?

With this move Black seizes space on the kingside and prepares the possibility of ...♘h7-g5, whilst depriving White of the use of the g4-square in many situations.

14...♖fe8 is the subject of the next main game, while Black can also play:

a) 14...♘e8 15 ♘a4 ♘c7 16 ♗g4! (making full use of the g4-square) 16...♘e5 17 ♘b6 ♖ad8 18 ♗h3 ♘a8 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘c4 and White was in control in Ehlvest-Minasian, New York 1993.

b) 14...♘e5 (this is probably premature as it takes the pressure off the white e-pawn) 15 ♗e2 ♖fe8 16 h3 ♖ac8 17 ♗h2 g5 18 ♗f1 ♘g6 19 ♕d2 ♘d7 20 ♘e2 ♘de5 21 ♘g3 and Black's kingside advances had only weakened the f5-square in Solozhenkin-Vehi Bach, Barcelona 1993.

c) 14...♖ac8 and now:

c1) 15 ♕d2 h5 16 h3 c4 17 ♘a4 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♘b6 c3! with good counterplay in Wegner-Tolnai, Balaton-bereny 1988.

c2) 15 ♘a4 c4 16 ♖c1 h5 17 h3 ♘h7 18 ♕d2 ♕f6 with a very complicated game in Litinskaya-Madl, Thessaloniki Women's Olympiad 1988.

d) 14...♖ab8!? (a very practical waiting move) and now:

d1) 15 ♕d2 (White prepares to regroup with 16 ♗e2-f1 since the e-pawn will be immune from capture due to 16...♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♗g4) 15...b5 (consistent with Black's previous move) 16 axb6 ♖xb6 and Black will have more or less equal chances after ...♖fb8.

d2) 15 ♕c2 ♖ab8 15 a5 ♘e8 16 ♗e2 ♘c7 17 ♗c4 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 and again Black was fine in Krumpacnik-Cebalo, Ptuj 1995.

d3) 15 ♘a4 ♘e5! (this makes much more sense now that White cannot simply drop the bishop back to e2; after 15...♘e8 16 ♖b1 ♘c7 17 b4 cxb4 18 ♖xb4 ♘b5 19 ♕d2 ♖fc8 20 ♗g4! White again had a firm grip on the position in Browne-Cebalo, Taxco Interzonal 1985) 16 ♗xe5 (or 16 ♘b6 ♘fd7 17 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 and Black is ready with either ...b7-b5 or perhaps even ...f7-f5) 16...♕xe5 17 ♖b1 ♘d7 18 b4 ♕d4 19 ♕e2 cxb4 20 ♖ed1 ♕f6 with a roughly level game in Browne-D.Gurevich, USA Championship, Estes Park 1985.

15 g3

This creates a retreat square for the light-squared bishop on g2, but does rather weaken the kingside. 15 e5?! is premature due to 15...dxe5 (but not 15...♘xe5?! 16 ♗xe5 dxe5 17 d6 ♕e6 18 ♘a4) 16 d6 ♕e6 17 ♗xb7 ♖a7 18 ♗f3 ♖b8 and White's pawns were very loose in Tukmakov-Psakhis, Sochi 1987.

After 15 h3 I like the idea of ...♖ab8 with similar play to line 'd' in the previous note. The inclusion of ...h7-h5 and h2-h3 should be slightly in Black's favour as his opponent is deprived of the g4-square for his bishop. Also harmless is 15 ♘a4 ♘h7 16 ♗d2 (or 16 ♖c1 ♘g5 17 b4 ♗h6! with good counter chances) 16...♘g5 17 g3 ♘xf3+ and here a draw was agreed in Beliavsky-Psakhis, USSR Championship, Minsk 1987.

15...♖ab8

Psakhis's suggestion of 15...♘e8 also makes sense now that White cannot play ♗g4, e.g. 16 ♗g2 ♘c7 with a very playable game.

16 ♘a4 ♘e8

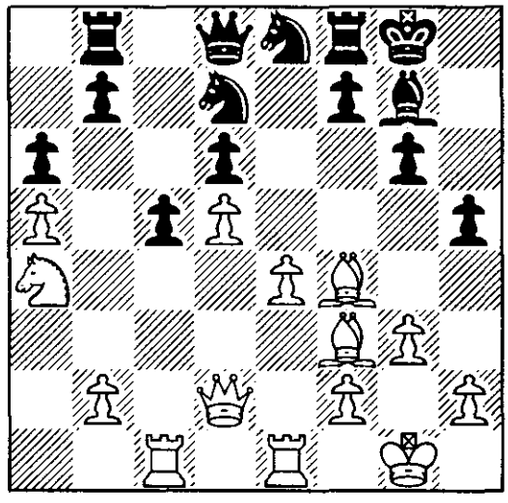
16...b5?! runs into 17 axb6 ♘xb6 18 e5.

17 ♖c1 ♕d8

Black must watch out for a deadly ♘xc5, e.g. 17...b5? 18 axb6 ♘xb6 19 ♘xc5 g5 20 ♘xa6 or 17...♘c7? 18 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 19 ♖xc5 dxc5 20 d6 (Psakhis), although in the latter line 18 b4! looks even more effective to me.

18 ♕d2

18 ♗d2 allows Black to play ...♗d4.



18...b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 ♘xc5!?

White bravely decides to go for it.

20...dxc5 21 ♗xb8

After 21 e5 Psakhis gives 21...♘c7 22 ♖xc5 ♘b5 with an unclear position, but perhaps Black can even try the greedy 21...♘a4!?, e.g. 22 e6 fxe6 23 ♗xb8 ♖xf3 24 ♕d1 ♖f8 25 ♕xa4 ♕xb8 and Black should be well placed.

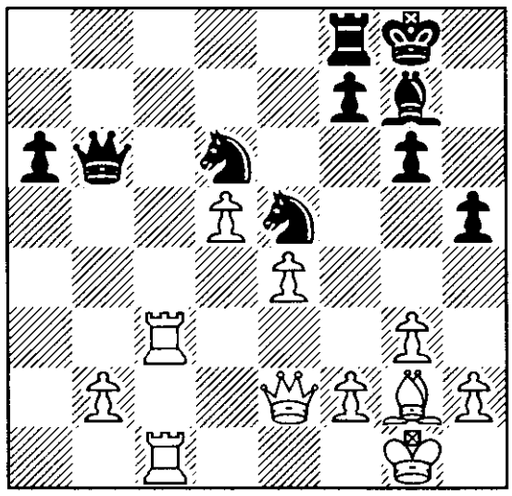
21...♕xb8 22 ♖xc5 ♘d6 23 ♖ec1

Here 23 e5 is well met by 23...♘d7.

23...♘d7 24 ♖5c2 ♕b3

24...f5 is more to the point.

25 ♗g2 ♘e5 26 ♖c3 ♕b6 27 ♕e2



27...a5?!

This seems a little unnecessary. 27...♘b5 28 ♕e3 ♘d4 was much more apposite.

28 h3 h4 29 gxh4 ♗h6 30 ♖d1

30 ♖1c2 (Psakhis) offered better defensive chances.

30...♗f4 31 ♔h1 ♔g7 32 h5 g5 33 ♖g1 ♔h6 34 ♗f3 ♖b8 35 h4 gxh4 36 ♕f1 ♕xb2 37 ♕g2 ♗g3 38 fxg3 ♕xc3 39 ♗d1 ♕e3 40 ♕f1 ♕xe4+ 0-1

Game 14
D.Paulsen-Foisor
Berlin open 1987

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♗g4 11 ♗f4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♕e7 13 ♖e1

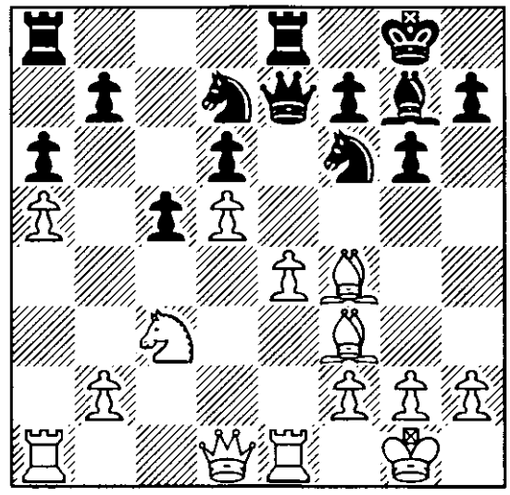
The impetuous 13 e5 leads to a very complicated game after 13...dxe5 14 d6 ♕e6 and now:

a) 15 ♗g5 sets a positional trap, i.e. 15...♘c6? 16 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 17 ♗xc6! bxc6 18 ♘e4 with a powerful grip on the position in Alburt-Kudrin, USA Championship 1983. However, Black should simply play 15...♘bd7! 16 ♗xb7 ♖a7! 17 ♗f3 ♖b8 (17...h6 18 ♗e3 only helps White) 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♕f5 with a fine game in P.Littlewood-Povah, Ramsgate 1984.

b) 15 ♖e1 ♘bd7 16 ♗xb7 ♖a7! (16...♖ab8 17 ♗xa6 ♖xb2 is also possible, although I would be reluctant to allow White a passed a-pawn) 17 ♗c6 (White did not really have enough for the pawn after 17 ♗f3 ♖b8 18 ♘d5 ♕xd6 19 ♗g5 ♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♕f8 in Browne-D.Gurevich, New York 1984) 17...♖b8 18 ♕d2 ♖b6 19 ♘d5 and now instead of 19...♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♕e8 with an unclear position in C.Hansen-Y.Grünfeld, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984, simply 19...♕xd6 looks good to me after 20 ♘xb6 ♕xc6 or 20 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6.

13...♘bd7 14 a5 ♖fe8

A very logical move, keeping his options open.



15 ♕d2

The actual move order of the game was 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 a6 8 a4 ♗g7 9 e4 ♗g4 10 ♗e2 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 0-0 12 0-0 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 ♘bd7 14 ♕d2 ♖fe8 15 a5.

After 15 h3 Black can either continue his standard plan of playing on the kingside with 15...h5, e.g. 16 ♖b1 (16 ♕d2 transposes to the next note) 16...♘h7 17 ♕d2 ♕f6 18 ♘a4 g5 19 ♗g3 ♕g6 with good attacking chances in Piket-Spraggett, Oviedo rapidplay 1992, or try his luck on the queenside with 15...♖ab8 16 ♗e2 b5 17 axb6 ♖xb6 18 ♖xa6 ♘xe4 19 ♗d3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♖xa6 21 ♗xa6 ♕h4 with decent prospects in Gershon-Marin, Tel Aviv

2000.

15...♖ac8

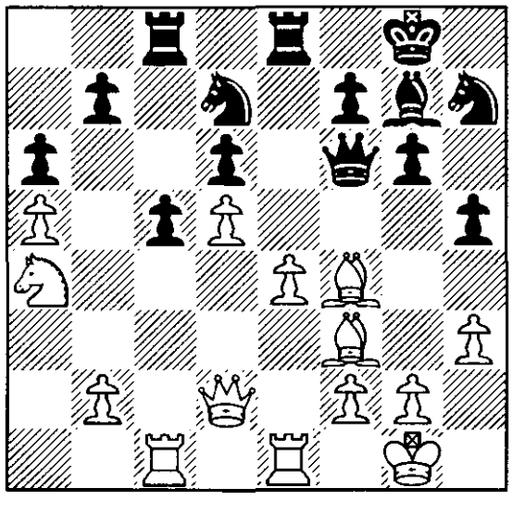
Also possible is the immediate 15...h5 16 h3 and now:

a) 16...♘h7 17 ♖a3 ♕f6 18 ♘a4 g5 19 ♗h2 ♕g6 and again Black had good play on the kingside in Hjartarson-Suba, Manila Olympiad 1992.

b) 16...♖ac8 17 ♗d1 (White went badly astray with 17 b3?! ♘h7 18 ♖ac1 ♗d4 19 ♗e3 ♗f6 20 ♗f4 ♘g5 21 ♕e2 ♘e5 22 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♘d1?? ♘xh3+ 24 gxh3 ♕g5+ 25 ♔f1 ♕xc1 26 ♘e3 ♕b2 0-1 in Henrichsen-Emms, Copenhagen 1993) 17...c4 18 ♗c2 ♘e5 with a reasonable game for Black in C.Hansen-Ward, Copenhagen 1996.

16 ♘a4 h5 17 ♖ac1 ♘h7 18 h3 ♕f6

Black is slowly building up his forces on the kingside.



19 b3?!

White prevents ...c5-c4, but this looks too slow. However, 19 ♖c4 g5 20 ♗h2 ♕g6 21 ♗d1 ♗d4 22 ♗c2 ♘e5 23 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♘b6 ♖ce8 was also fine for Black in Browne-Foisor, New York 1988.

19...g5 20 ♗e3 ♕g6 21 g3 g4 22 hxg4 hxg4 23 ♗g2 ♘hf6 24 ♗f4

White starts to drift but at this stage it is hard to see how he can improve his position.

24...♘h5 25 ♗e3 ♘e5 26 ♕d1

26 ♘b6 ♖c7 27 ♘c4 ♘f3+ 28 ♗xf3 gxf3 29 ♗f4 ♗d4 is very good for Black.

26...♘f3+ 27 ♗xf3 gxf3 28 ♕xf3 ♖xe4 29 ♔g2 ♖ce8 30 ♖h1?

The losing blunder, but after 30 ♗d2 f5 Black has total control of the e-file.

30...♘xg3 31 ♕xg3 ♖g4 32 ♖h3 ♖xe3 0-1

Game 15
Rajkovic-De Firmian
Vrsac 1983

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 a6 9 a4 ♗g4

It may be better to castle first here and then play ....♗g4 next move if White castles (see the next note).

10 0-0

Black's slightly careless move order allows his opponent the opportunity of playing 10 ♘d2! ♗xe2 11 ♕xe2 in favourable circumstances, e.g. 11...♘bd7 12 ♘c4! ♘b6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♕xe5+ ♔f8 15 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 16 a5! ♕d8 17 0-0 with a very promising position for White in Mikhalevski-Marin, Tel Aviv 2000.

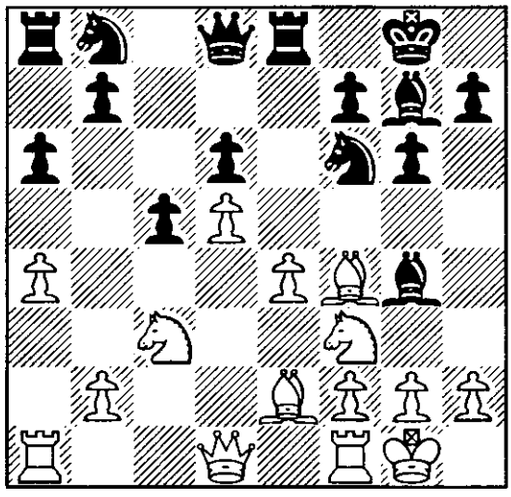
10...0-0 11 ♗f4 ♖e8

This is an interesting alternative to the standard 11...♗xf3 (see Games 13 and 14). 11...♕e7 leads to an inferior version of the game after 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 a5 (after 15 ♖ae1 ♖fb8 Black is ready to start his attack on the queenside) 15...♗d4, as the queen on e7 is less useful than the rook on e8. However, Black has the additional possibility of 13...♘bd7 in this line, e.g. 14 ♘c4 ♘e8 15 ♖fe1 ♗d4 (Psakhis suggests 15...♖b8 16 ♖fe1 ♗d4, but this invites 17 e5, e.g. 17...dxe5 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♖xe5 with a promising endgame for White) 16 a5 ♘e5 with an unclear position in Radziejewski-Radowiecki, Polish Team Championship 1987.

The immediate 11...♘h5!? is also possible, e.g. 12 ♗g5 ♗f6 and now:

a) 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♘d2 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♘d7 16 ♔h1 ♗d4 with a very reasonable game for Black in Salov-Romanishin, Irkutsk 1986.

b) 13 ♗e3 ♘d7 14 ♘d2 (or 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♕xb6 with equality in Spraggett-Romanishin, Taxco Interzonal 1985) 14...♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♖e8 16 a5 ♗d4 and Black was fine in Vladimirov-Bannik, Leningrad 1962.



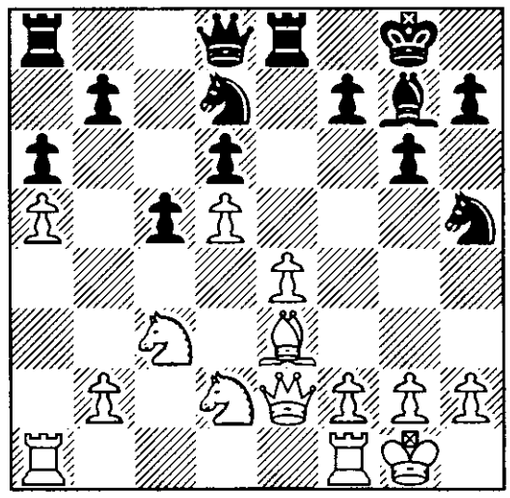
12 ♘d2

12 h3? is a common blunder in this position. After 12...♘xe4! (the routine 12...♗xf3? is often played) 13 hxg4 (or 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♗g5 ♕e8 15 ♗d3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♖b4 17 ♖ae1 ♗e5 and Black was winning in Uhlmann-Fischer, Palma Mallorca Interzonal 1970) 13...♗xc3 14 ♕b3 ♗b4 15 ♗d3 ♕f6 16 ♗h2 ♘d7 Black was simply a pawn up with a good position in B.Vladimirov-Yudovich, Gorky 1954.

12 ♕c2 is also ineffective, e.g. 12...♕e7 13 ♖fe1 ♘bd7 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 c4 16 a5 ♘c5 with a strong grip on the position in the game Donner-Planinc, Amsterdam 1973.

12...♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 a5

White's alternatives here are considered in the next main game.



15...♗d4!

Various other moves have been tried here, but the game move looks like the most effective:

a) 15...♖c8 16 g4 ♘hf6 17 f3 ♘e5 18 ♔h1 h6 19 g5 ♘h5 20 f4 ♘d7 left Black on the retreat in Browne-De Firmian, USA Championship, Estes Park 1985.

b) 15...♕c7 16 g4 ♘hf6 17 h3!? (Psakhis) is an improved version for White of the note to White's 16th move in Game 16.

c) 15...♕e7!? 16 ♖a4 ♖ab8 seems playable for Black.

d) 15...♕h4!? 16 ♘c4 (after 16 ♖a4, when the rook looks good, facing the black queen along the rank, Black has 16...♘f4 and now 17 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 18 g3 ♕f6 or 17 ♕d1 b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 with a reasonable game in each instance) 16...♘f4 18 ♗xf4 (18 ♕f3 ♘e5! 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 was okay for Black in Beliavsky-Kasparov, USSR Championship, Minsk 1979) 18...♕xf4 19 g3 ♕f6 20 f4 ♕e7 21 ♖ae1, as in Plaskett-Pritchett, England 1983, when 21...♗d4+ 22 ♔g2 ♖ab8 with the idea of ...b7-b5 offers Black good counterplay.

16 g4

It is safer to play 16 ♖a4, e.g.

a) 16...♕f6 17 ♕d3 ♘e5 (not 17...♘f4? 18 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 19 ♘e2 ♕f6 20 ♘xd4 cxd4 21 ♕xd4 and Black had shed a pawn in

Spassov-Szymczak, Warsaw 1983) 18 ♗xd4 ♘xd3 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 with a pleasant endgame for Black in Karpman-Shabalov, Minsk 1990.

b) 16...♗xe3 17 ♕xe3 f5 18 f4 b5! (after 18...♘hf6 Curt Hansen's 19 ♕d3 makes life a little unpleasant for Black) 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 ♖aa1 ♕f6 21 e5 dxe5 (21...♕f7 22 e6 ♕b7, with the idea of rounding up the d-pawn with ...♘f6, was interesting) 22 fxe5 ♕xe5 23 ♕xc5 ♕e3+ with a level endgame in Ubilava-Anikaev, Minsk 1983.

16...♘hf6 17 f3 h5

The immediate 17...b5 is also possible, with similar sacrificial ideas to the game, although the inclusion of ...h7-h5 and h2-h3 must be to Black's advantage.

18 h3

In view of what follows White should perhaps try 18 g5 ♘h7 19 h4 ♘e5 20 f4 ♘g4 21 ♗xd4 cxd4 22 ♘d1.

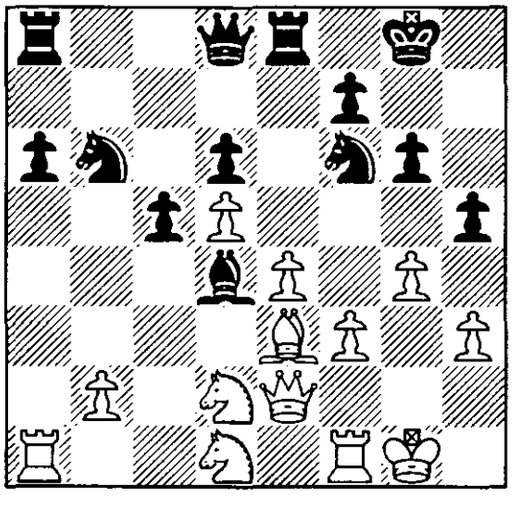
18...b5! 19 axb6

After 19 ♘d1 hxg4 20 hxg4 ♗xe3+ 21 ♘xe3 c4 Black has a very promising position.

19...♘xb6

White must now take steps to prevent ...♘bxd5.

20 ♘d1



20...♘bxd5!

Black plays the sacrifice anyway.

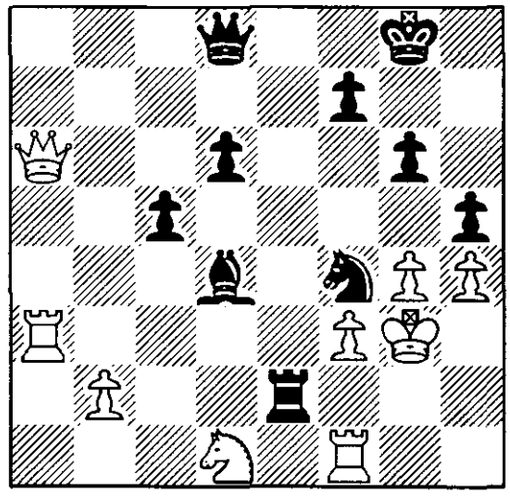
21 exd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘c4

White's position caves in after 22 ♖a3 ♖b8 23 ♘e4 (or 23 ♕f2 ♘xe3 24 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 25 ♘xe3 ♖xb2) 23...♘xe3 24 ♖xe3 (24 ♘xe3 ♖xb2) 24...d5 (Cebalo).

22...♖b8 23 ♖a3

23 ♖e1 ♘xe3 24 ♘cxe3 ♖xe3 25 ♘xe3 ♖xb2 26 ♕f1 ♕h4 is no defence for White.

23...♖b4 24 ♕c2 ♖xc4 25 ♕xc4 ♗xe3+ 26 ♔g2 ♘f4+ 27 ♔g3 ♗d4 28 ♕xa6 ♖e2 29 h4



29...g5?

Black misses the chance to finish the game with mate: 29...♖g2+ 30 ♔xf4 ♕f6+ 31 ♔e4 ♕e5+ 32 ♔d3 ♕e2, although the result is still not in any doubt.

30 hxg5 ♕xg5 31 ♕c8+ ♔g7 32 ♘f2 ♗xf2+ 33 ♖xf2 h4+ 0-1

Game 16
Portisch-Kasparov
Moscow 1981

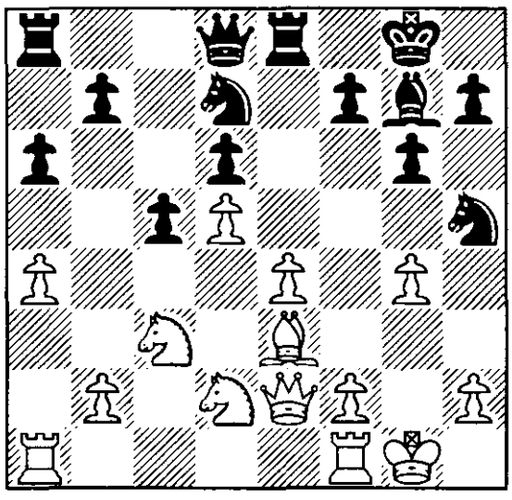
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 a6 8 a4 ♗g7 9 e4 ♗g4 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 g4!?

A very double-edged decision, creating weaknesses on the kingside in return for a greater space advantage. Apart from 15 a5 (see the previous main game) White has also tried:

a) 15 f4 f5! (exploiting the fact that e4xf5 fails to ...♖xe3) 16 ♘c4 ♘df6! 17

exf5 (17 e5 runs into 17...dxe5 18 ♘xe5 ♘xf4! 19 ♗xf4 ♘g4) 17...gxf5 18 ♖f3 ♘g4 with a very playable position for Black in Bönsch-Wojtkiewicz, Stara Zagora 1990.

b) 15 ♔h1 (preparing f2-f4) 15...♘e5 16 ♖g1 ♘f6 17 g4 ♕c8 18 g5 ♘fg4 19 f4 ♘xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♘d7 with chances for both sides in Bellon Lopez-Kindermann, Zurich 1984.



15...♘hf6

Although Black has 'wasted' two moves with his knight, he is now ready to strike back at the white position with ...h7-h5, since g4-g5 would allow ...♘g4.

16 f3

16 g5 ♘h5 17 f4 h6 is premature for White, while after 16 f4 h5! 17 h3 hxg4 18 hxg4 ♖b8 Black is ready to create some counterplay with ...b7-b5. However, 16 h3!? is quite popular, when 16...h5 is countered by 17 g5 ♘h7 18 f4 with a big space advantage. Black should therefore settle for 16...h6! followed by ...♘h7, as in Chernin-Balashov, German Bundesliga 1998/99, when he is once again ready to strike out at the white centre with ...f7-f5.

16...h6?!

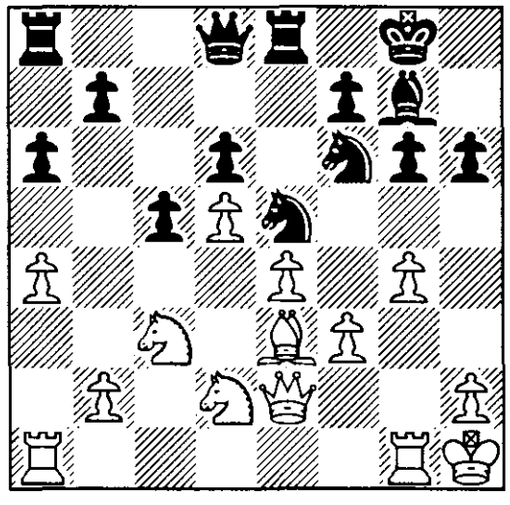
Here this move seems unnecessary, since White is not yet in any hurry to expand on the kingside, because g4-g5 can always be met by ...♘h5. Obviously 16...h5? 17 g5 ♘h7 18 f4 gives White exactly what he wants, while Kasparov's suggestion of 16...♕c7 does not really seem to improve the position of the queen very much. I prefer 16...♖b8, aiming to create a distraction on the queenside, e.g. 17 a5 b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 with ideas of 19...♘fxd5 in L.Bronstein-Emma, Argentine Championship 1980.

17 ♔h1 ♘e5

This is at least consistent with his previous move, aiming to hold up the advance of the white kingside pawns. After 17...b6 18 ♖g1 ♕e7 19 g5 hxg5 20 ♗xg5 ♕f8 21 ♘c4 Black was soon punished for his passive play in Grigorian-Pimenov, Moscow 1981. Note also that 17...♘h7 is much less effective here compared to the situation after 16 h3 as White has not loosened his kingside with additional pawn moves.

18 ♖g1

Now White really is threatened to crash forwards with his pawns, starting with f2-f4, so Kasparov tries to create a diversion.



18...b5! 19 g5! hxg5 20 ♗xg5 c4

Black would be without counterplay after 20...b4?! 21 ♘d1.

21 axb5 axb5 22 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 23 ♘xb5 ♕b8 24 ♘a3 ♕xb2 25 ♘axc4 ♘xc4 26 ♕xc4 ♘h5

I do not really believe that Black has enough for the pawn here. The fact that Kasparov manages to generate decent counterplay is more of a testament to his

ability than his position.

27 ♕c6 ♖b8 28 ♕xd6

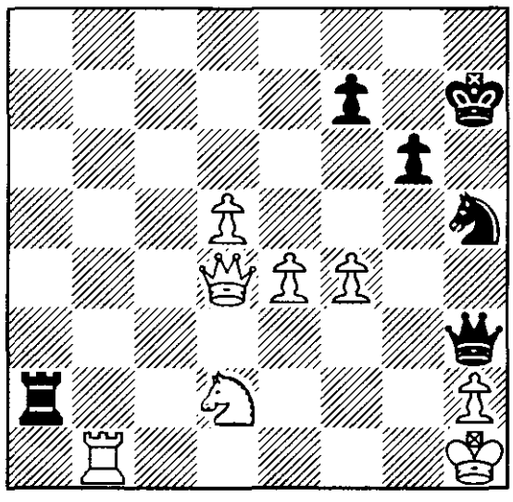
28 ♖b1 ♕xb1+ 29 ♘xb1 ♖xb1+ 30 ♔g2 ♗e5 was a safe way for White to play for a win, but Portisch was looking for more.

28...♗e5 29 ♕d7 ♕d4 30 ♕g4 ♖b2 31 ♖d1 ♕d3 32 ♕c8+ ♔g7 33 ♕c4 ♕a3 34 ♕e2 ♕a4

Kasparov prefers 34...♕a2, although after 35 ♕e3 I doubt whether Black really has enough for two pawns.

35 ♖b1 ♖a2 36 ♗e3 ♕d7 37 ♕f2 ♕h3 38 f4 ♗c3 39 ♗d4+ ♗xd4 40 ♕xd4+ ♔h7

Kasparov suggests that 40...f6 leads to a draw after 41 ♕c5 ♘g3+ 42 ♔g1 ♘e2+ 43 ♔h1 ♘g3+. He dismisses 41 ♕f2 on account of 41...♕d3 42 ♖d1 ♕c2 43 ♕f3 ♘xf4, but I reckon there must be a misprint here as 42 ♕c5! looks very good for White here. Kasparov probably meant 41...♕c3!, when White does indeed have nothing better than 42 ♖d1.



41 ♖g1

Kasparov rejects 41 ♕f2 on account of 41...♘f6, but what about 42 ♘f3 here? The threat of ♘g5+ is a real nuisance for Black, e.g. 42...♘xe4 43 ♘g5+ ♘xg5 44 ♕xa2.

41...♔g8 42 d6 ♖xd2!

Kasparov delivers a very attractive combination to force the draw.

43 ♕xd2 ♕f3+ 44 ♕g2 ♘g3+ 45 hxg3 ♕h5+ 46 ♕h2 ♕f3+ 47 ♖g2 ♕d1+ 48 ♕g1 ♕h5+ 49 ♖h2 ♕f3+ ½-½

Game 17
Nemet-Rajkovic
Yugoslav Ch., Novi Sad 1975

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♗g4 11 ♘d2!?

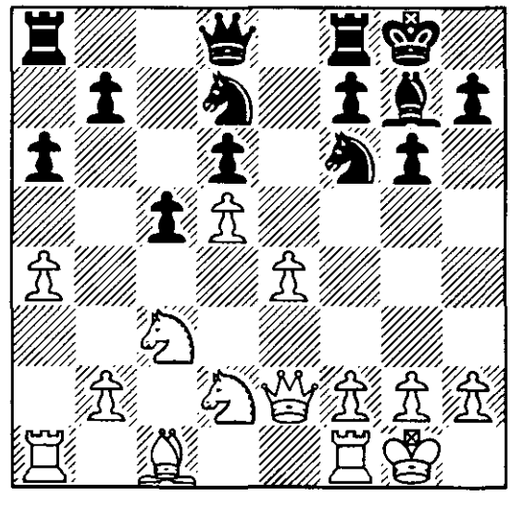
This is a very similar idea to the previous two games, except that White has yet to develop his queen's bishop. On the plus side this forces Black to exchange bishops by removing the option of ...♗xf3, but the downside is that White has to move the knight again before he can get the bishop out.

White has two other popular alternatives to 11 ♗f4:

a) 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 13 ♗f4 ♕e7 transposes to the position considered in Games 13 and 14, except that White has already committed himself to h2-h3.

b) 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 14 ♕c2 ♘bd7 15 ♗e2 ♖c8 and Black was fine in Andruet-De Firmian, Gausdal 1982.

11...♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♘bd7



13 ♘c4

White often seeks to cut out ...♘b6 with 13 a5, e.g. 13...♕e7 (13...♕c7 14 ♘c4 b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 and 13...♖e8 14 ♘c4 b5

both transpose to variations considered in the note to Black's 14th move with two additional moves played by each side) 14 ♖e1 (after 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 we are back in the main game) 14...b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 16 ♘c4 ♘xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♘g4! 18 h3 ♘e5 and Black was already slightly better in Punnett-Kinsman, Thames Valley League 1996.

White reaches a kind of Four Pawns Attack after 13 f4, but this should not be dangerous for Black at all after 13...♖e8.

13...♘b6 14 ♘e3

White should avoid exchanges if possible, since these will free Black's slightly cramped position. For example, after 14 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 15 a5 ♕c7 16 ♗d2 ♖ae8 17 ♖fe1 ♘d7 18 f4 f5 White's position was under great strain in Rapoport-Yudasin, Beersheva 1999. The knight does not sit well out on the edge of the board after 14 ♘a3, e.g. 14...♖e8 15 ♖d1? (15 ♕c2? was necessary) 15...♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 f5 17 f3 fxe4 18 fxe4 ♕h4 and White was already losing in Komljenovic-Reinaldo Castineira, Dos Hermanas 2000.

14...♕e7

14...♕c7 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c4 b5 17 axb6 ♘xb6 is also very reasonable for Black, but if Black plans to play for ...b7-b5, he could try 14...♖e8!? 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c4 b5!, since 17 ♘xd6 ♖e7 18 ♗f4 (or 18 f4 b4 19 ♘a4 ♘xd5 – Beliavsky) 18...♘h5 19 ♗e3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♕b8 21 ♘f5 ♖xe4 was very murky in Beliavsky-G. Hernandez, Elista Olympiad 1998.

15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c4 ♘e5

16...♖ae8 17 ♗g5 is similar to the next note.

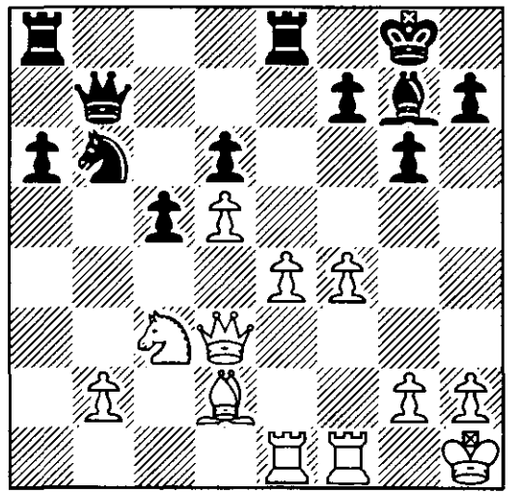
17 ♘xe5

This simplifies Black's task. White should try to keep material on if possible. After 17 ♘b6 ♖ae8 18 ♗g5 h6! 19 ♗d2 ♘fd7! Black was fine in Ivkov-Rajkovic, Yugoslavia 1976, but White can consider 19 ♗h4!? with a complicated game in prospect.

17...♕xe5 18 f4

The white rook was somewhat out on a limb after 18 ♖a4 ♖ae8 19 ♕f3 ♘d7 20 ♗f4 ♕e7 21 ♕g3 ♘e5 in Renaze-Magerramov, Chartres 1990.

18...♕e7 19 ♗d2 ♖fe8 20 ♖ae1 ♘d7 21 ♔h1 b5 22 axb6 ♘xb6 23 ♕d3 ♕b7



Black has a perfectly satisfactory position here. Nemet now decides to undertake a speculative pawn sacrifice and is ultimately rewarded for his bravery with a spectacular victory. However, as we shall see Black had numerous opportunities to defend.

24 e5?! dxe5 25 f5 c4

This invites the queen to a better square. After 25...♖ad8! 26 fxg6 (or 26 d6 c4 27 ♕e4 ♕b8 and White does not have enough for the pawn – Nemet) 26...hxg6 27 ♗g5 ♖d6 28 ♘e4 ♖xd5 29 ♕h3 ♕d7 Black should be able to rebuff the attack.

26 ♕e4 ♘d7

The pin on the knight is too strong after 26...♖ad8 27 ♗e3 ♘xd5 28 fxg6 fxg6 29 ♖d1.

27 ♗c1 ♖ac8 28 ♕h4 f6?

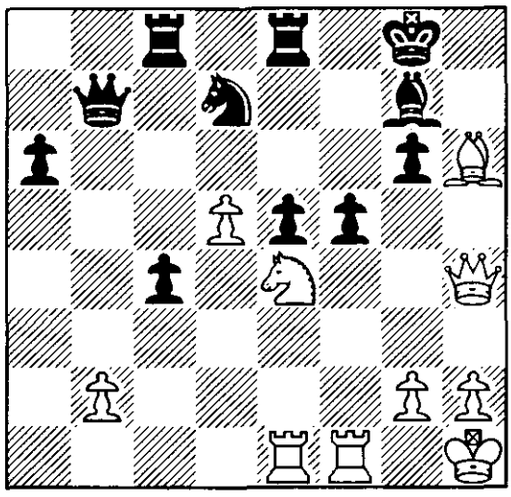
It was surely time to give back material with 28...e4!, e.g. 29 fxg6 hxg6 30 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 31 ♕xe4 ♘e5 and Black has freed his position.

29 fxg6 hxg6 30 ♗h6 f5?

This is really asking for it. 30...♕xb2 31 ♘e4 ♕b6 32 ♖b1 is also risky, but

30...♕b6 would have kept the game in the balance.

31 ♘e4!!



31...fxe4?

This loses by force. Of course, 31...♕xd5 32 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 33 ♖d1 is very unpleasant for Black, but 31...♕b6! offers more resistance, e.g. 32 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 33 ♘g5 ♖h8 34 ♘e6+ ♔f7 35 ♕g3 and now:

a) 35...♖h5 36 ♖xe5 ♖ch8 37 h3 ♘xe5 38 ♕xe5 ♖g8 (or 38...♖8h7 39 ♖e1 with serious threats) 39 d6 and Black will not survive for long.

b) 35...♖cg8! 36 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 37 ♕xe5 ('and wins' - Nemet) 37...♔e7! 38 ♘c5+ ♔f7 (38...♔d8 39 d6 is nasty) 39 d6 ♖e8 40 ♕d5+ ♔g7 41 ♕d4+ ♔h7 42 d7 ♖e4 43 ♕d5 and although White has a strong attack, Black is still on the board.

32 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 33 ♖f7+! ♔xf7 34 ♕h7+ ♔f6 35 ♖f1+ ♔g5 36 h4+ ♔g4 37 ♕xg6+

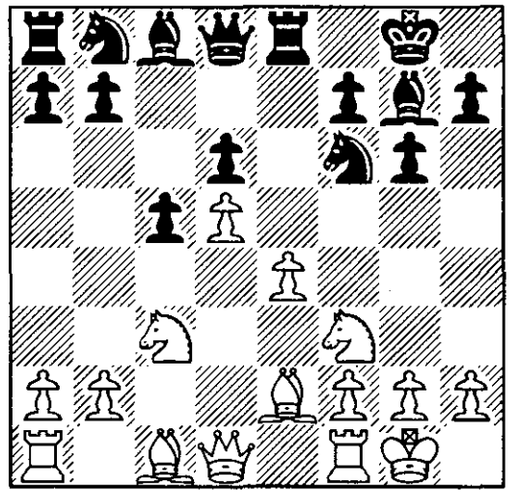
37 ♕h6 would have forced mate next move with ♕g5, but it hardly makes any difference.

37...♔xh4 38 ♕h6+ ♔g4 39 ♕h3+ ♔g5 40 ♖f5+ 1-0

Game 18
Khalifman-Akopian
FIDE World Ch. (Game 6) 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8

This is Black's most common alternative to 9...a6 10 a4 ♗g4.



10 ♘d2

The slightly careless 10 ♕c2 allows Black a good play with 10...♘a6!, e.g. 11 a3?! ♘c7 12 ♖e1 ♖b8 13 ♗f4 b5 with equality in Veksler-Shestoperov, Omsk 1973; 11 ♗f4 ♘b4 12 ♕b1 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗e3 f5 15 a3 fxe4! with balanced complications in Portisch-Adamski, Raach Zonal 1969; or 11 ♖e1 ♘c7 12 ♗f4 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗h4 ♘f4 15 ♗c4 ♕d7!? 16 ♗g3 ♘h5! 17 a4 ♘xg3 18 hxg3 a6 19 a5 ♖b8 with a very comfortable game (Kapengut).

10...a6

If Black is going to play the ...♖e8 and ...♘bd7 variation, then he should probably omit this move and play 10...♘bd7 - see Games 19 and 20.

11 a4 ♘bd7

The actual move order in the game was 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 a6 7 a4 g6 8 ♘d2 ♘bd7 9 e4 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 ♖e8.

12 ♕c2

White invariably chooses to bolster this e-pawn with this move. However, it is also perfectly reasonable to play 12 ♖e1 with the idea of bringing the knight back to f1 to reinforce the kingside, e.g.

12...♘e5 13 ♘f1 ♖b8 (with the white knight over on the kingside Black is much more likely to be able to arrange some queenside counterplay here than in our main game) 14 f4 ♘ed7 and White's pieces are rather clumsily placed compared to a Four Pawns Attack.

12...♖b8?!

Although this move allows Black to consider answering a4-a5 with ...b7-b5, I am not really sure that Black should be playing on this side of the board at all here. With most of the white pieces on the queenside Black should be looking towards the centre and the kingside for his counterplay. For example, 12...♘e5 13 ♖a3 (13 f4 ♘eg4 14 ♘f3?! ♘xe4! 15 ♘xe4 ♗f5 16 ♘fg5?! ♗d4+ 17 ♔h1 ♖xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♘xh2 was disastrous for White in Kr.Georgiev-Meszaros, Burgas 1987) 13...g5! and now:

a) 14 a5 g4 (14...♘fg4 with the idea of ...♘h6 and ...f7-f5 is also interesting according to Psakhis) 15 ♘d1 ♘h5 16 g3 ♘f6! 17 ♘e3 ♕e7 18 ♖b3 h5 19 ♖b6 ♗h6 and Black had made real progress on the kingside in Grigorian-Psakhis, Yerevan 1986.

b) 14 ♘d1 ♘g6! 15 ♘e3 ♘f4 16 ♗d1 b6 17 f3 ♖b8 (perhaps 17...♖a7-e7!?) 18 g3 and now in Spraggett-Barlov, New York 1987, Black should have taken the bull by the horns with 18...♘h3+ - Velickovic.

13 ♖a3

This is nearly always a useful move for White in this variation as the rook is usually able to exert an important influence along the third rank.

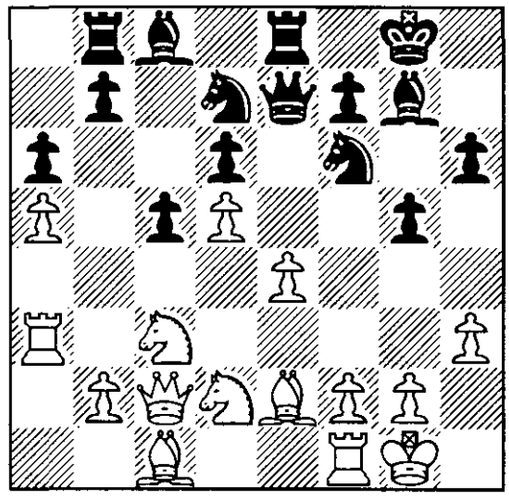
13...♕e7

I am not sure that this really improves his position very much. Black is surely going to have to play ...♘e5 and ...g7-g5 eventually so it may as well be here.

14 h3 h6

Black decides that he has to play on the kingside with ...g6-g5, but I do not understand why in that case he did not just play 14...g5 straightaway, as ...h7-h6 may prove to be superfluous.

15 a5 g5



16 ♘c4!?

16 ♖e1 ♘e5 17 ♘f1 and then ♘g3 was much more solid, but Khalifman was determined to seize the initiative. Although the match situation was such that a draw would suffice to see him crowned FIDE World Champion, he was determined to achieve this by establishing a position of strength rather than having to defend for the draw.

16...♘e5

Khalifman had reasoned that after 16...♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♗d3 ♖d4 20 ♗e3 (not 20 ♘xd6?! ♘e5) 20...♖xd5 21 ♗e4 ♖e5 22 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 Black would have had few winning chances.

17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 f4 ♕d4+ 19 ♔h2 b5

Black had to do something about ♖a4 and 19...♗d7 20 e5! dxe5 21 fxg5 hxg5 22 ♗xg5 was pretty horrible, e.g. 22...e4 (the only way to free the queen) 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♖xf6 ♕e5+ 25 ♔h1 ♕xf6 26 ♘xe4 ♕e5 27 ♖g3+ ♔h8 28 ♘g5 and wins - Kasparov.

20 axb6 ♖xb6 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxg5 hxg5 23 ♗xg5 e4 24 ♘a4 ♖d6 25 ♖g3

This looks unnecessarily risky. Both 25 ♗f4 ♖xd5 26 ♘b6 and 25 ♗e3 ♕xd5 26

♘xc5 (Cvetkovic) offer White good prospects of an advantage.

25...♘xd5 26 ♗h5

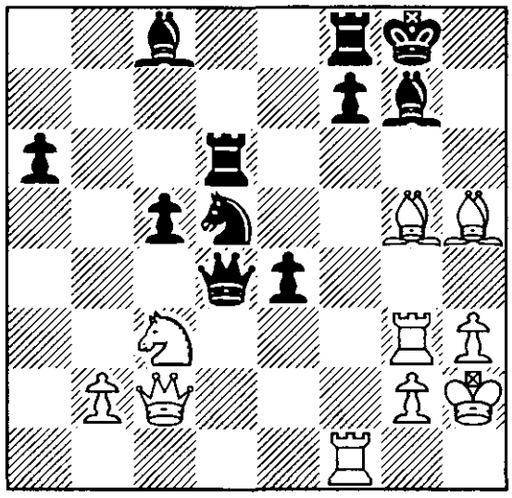
The black pawns start to look menacing after 26 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 27 ♘xc5 f5.

26...♖f8

This move seems totally out of context in such a cut and thrust game, but Akopian probably feared a repetition of moves after 'best play' with 26...♘f6! 27 ♗e2 ♘d5.

27 ♘c3!

Just as on his previous move 27 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 28 ♘xc5 f5 looks very dangerous for White.



27...♔h8

After 27...♘xc3 28 bxc3 the *BCM* gives the spectacular variation 28...♕c4 29 ♗f6! ♕xf1 30 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 31 ♕xe4 ♕f5 32 ♕e7.

28 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 29 ♗xf7 ♗e5 30 ♘xd5 ♖xd5

Given the match situation Akopian could hardly go in for 30...♗xg3+ 31 ♔xg3 ♖xd5 32 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 with a dead draw, but the game move does not offer him any winning chances either.

31 ♗xd5

Khalifman bails out to a draw in order to become FIDE World Champion, although in fact the spectacular 31 ♗f6+! ♗xf6 32 ♖g8+ ♔h7 33 ♗xd5 was winning for him.

31...♕xd5 32 ♕d2 ♕xd2 33 ♗xd2 ♔h7 34 ♗c3 ♗f4 35 ♗e1 e3 36 ♔g1 ♗xg3 37 ♗xg3 a5 38 ♗f4 e2 39 ♔f2 ♗b7 40 ♔xe2 ♗xg2 ½-½

Game 19
Gelfand-Hall
Malmo 1999

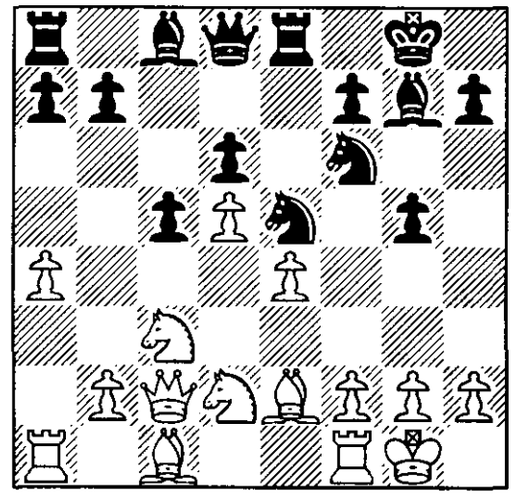
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♖e8 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 a4

White cannot omit this move for long as he must watch out for a timely ...b7-b5 and will often want to bring his queen's rook into play with ♖a3. For example, 11 h3 g5 12 ♘c4 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♗d3 ♖h4! 15 ♘xd6 ♘e5! was fine for Black in Langeweg-Psakhis, Sarajevo 1981, while 11 ♕c2 ♘e5 12 b3 g5 13 ♗b2 ♘g6 14 ♖ae1 ♘f4 15 ♗b5 ♖f8 16 a4 a6 17 ♗c4 ♘g4 18 ♘e2 ♘e5 was also satisfactory in Lein-Plaskett, Hastings 1982. Note that 11 f4 transposes to the Four Pawns Attack (see the notes to Game 25).

11...♘e5 12 ♕c2

White's alternatives here are considered in the next main game.

12...g5



We have now reached the same position as after 12 moves in the previous game, except that Black has played the very useful ...♘e5 and ...g6-g5 rather than ...a7-a6 and ...♖b8.

13 ♖a3

An exchange of knights with 13 ♘c4 (or 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘g4) 13...♘xc4 14 ♗xc4 helps to free Black's rather cramped position, e.g. 14...♘h5 (here 14...♘g4 allows White to consolidate with 15 ♘e2-g3) and now:

a) After 15 g3 ♗h3 16 ♖e1 ♗e5 17 ♕d1 ♘g7 18 ♗b5 ♖f8 White soon came to regret having weakened himself on the kingside after 19 f4?! gxf4 20 gxf4 ♗d4+ 21 ♗e3 ♕h4 22 ♕f3 ♘h5 23 ♔h1 ♔h8 24 ♖g1 ♖g8 25 ♖ae1 ♗g2+! 0-1 in Flear-Plaskett, Lewisham 1983.

b) 15 ♖a3 ♗e5 16 ♘e2 ♕f6 and Black was building up nicely on the kingside in F.Portisch-Danner, Reggio Emilia 1979.

13...♕e7

Several other moves have been tried here:

a) 13...♘fd7 14 ♘d1 ♘f8 has been played a few times, but 15 ♗b5, exploiting the fact that Black has omitted ...a7-a6, is irritating as Black does not really want to exchange bishops with ...♗d7, and 15...♖e7 is very clumsy after 16 ♘e3, as in Anapolsky-Kotsur, Alma Ata 1991.

b) 13...♘fg4 14 ♘d1 ♖f8, preparing ...f7-f5, is interesting, e.g. 15 f3 ♘h6 16 g4 ♘g6 17 ♘c4 ♗d4 18 ♔h1 f6 and a draw was agreed in Schmidt-Barbero, Vinkovci 1986.

c) 13...g4!? and now:

c1) 14 ♗b5 ♖f8!? 15 ♖e1 ♘h5 16 ♘f1 f5 and Black was motoring on the kingside in Dzieciolowski-Holm, Zabrze 1977.

c2) 14 ♘c4 ♘h5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 g3 ♕f6 and Black had plenty of play on the kingside in Co.Ionescu-Pa.Stefanov, Romania 1979.

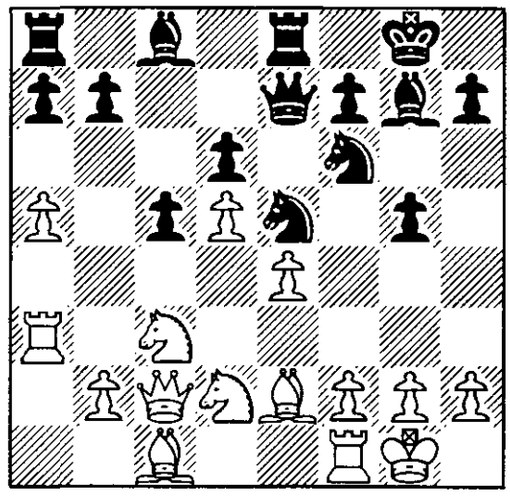
c3) 14 ♘d1 ♘g6 15 ♘e3 and now instead of 15...♕e7 16 ♗b5 ♖f8 17 a5 ♖b8, as in Averkin-Pigusov, Kazan 1985, I prefer 15...♘f4 with reasonable prospects.

14 a5

A new move in this particular position. White has also tried:

a) 14 ♖e1 ♘g6 15 ♘f1 and now instead of 15...♘f4 16 ♘g3 ♘g4 17 ♘d1 ♗d4 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♘e3, when White took control of the important f5-square in Kindermann-Danner, Budapest 1985, 15...h6 was possible followed by a slow build-up on the kingside.

b) 14 ♘d1 h6?! (14...♘g6 looks more consistent to me, as the g-pawn was not in any danger) 15 ♘e3 a6 16 f4 (it looks risky for White to give up the e5-square in this fashion) 16...gxf4 17 ♖xf4 ♘g6 18 ♖f1 ♗d7 with a reasonable game for Black in Tarjan-Grünfeld, Buenos Aires 1978.



14...h6

It is difficult to choose between this move and 14...g4 15 f4 gxf3 16 ♘xf3 ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♘g4 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗f4 with an unclear position – Gelfand.

15 ♘d1

15 ♗b5 ♖f8 16 ♘d1, reaching the same position as after 16 moves in the main game, was more accurate.

15...♗d7 16 ♘c3 ♖f8

Gelfand suggests 16...♘g6 17 ♖b3 ♗c8 18 ♗b5 ♖f8 with an improved version of the main game for Black.

17 ♗b5 ♗c8 18 ♘d1 ♘h5

Both 18...♘g6 19 ♘e3 ♘f4 20 g3 ♘h3+ 21 ♔g2 g4 and 18...♘e8 19 ♘e3 ♘g4 20 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 21 h3 (or 21 a6 bxa6 22 ♗xa6 ♘c7 23 ♗d3 f5) 21...♘c7 were also

possible.

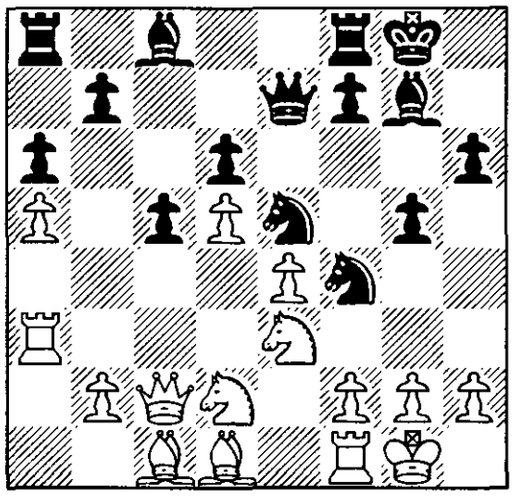
19 ♘e3 a6?!

19...♘f4 20 ♖e1 ♘g4 21 ♘dc4 ♘f6 offered Black good counterplay.

20 ♗e2

20 ♗a4! ♘f6 21 ♖e1 with the idea of ♘df1-g3 was better for White. In the game White's light-squared bishop has to go into contortions.

20...♘f4 21 ♗d1



21...f5?

This aggression rebounds. Gelfand recommends 21...♗d7, e.g. 22 ♘dc4 ♘xc4 23 ♘xc4 f5 24 ♗xf4 gxf4 25 ♘b6 fxe4 26 ♘xd7 (after 26 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 Black's central pawns are very powerful) 26...♕xd7 27 ♕xe4 or 22 g3 ♘h3+ 23 ♔g2 g4 24 ♖b3 ♖ab8 25 f4 gxf3+ 26 ♘xf3 ♘xf3 27 ♗xf3 ♘g5 28 ♘f5 ♗xf5 29 exf5 with unclear complications in each instance. Black really should be okay after 21...♗d7.

22 exf5 ♕f7 23 ♘e4 ♖d8 24 g4 ♘xd5 25 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 26 h4 b5

26...gxh4 runs into 27 ♗xh6!

27 hxg5 hxg5 28 ♗xg5 ♗b7 29 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♖e3 ♘c4 31 ♖ee1 ♕d4 32 b3 ♘e5 33 ♕d2 ♘d3 34 ♕g5 ♖d7 35 ♗f3 ♘xe1 36 ♖xe1 ♗xe4 37 ♖xe4 ♕a1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕f6 39 ♕h5 ♖d8 40 ♖e6 ♕f7 1-0

With the time control reached Black threw in the towel, rather than let White choose from any number of wins, e.g. 41 ♕g5 ♖d7 42 ♖g6 ♔f8 43 f6.

Game 20
Karolyi-Vaisser
Frunze 1987

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♘bd7 8 e4 ♗g7 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8 11 a4 ♘e5 12 ♖e1

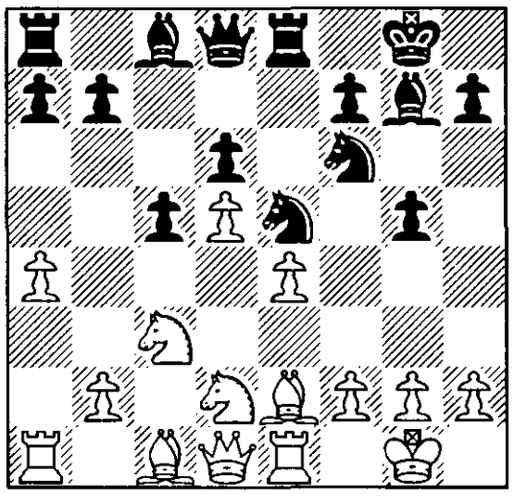
We have already seen this move, preparing ♘f1-g3 to bolster the kingside, in the notes to the previous two main games. Apart from 12 ♕c2 (see the previous main game) several other ideas have been tried for White including:

a) 12 h3 (I am not really sure why White would want to weaken himself on the kingside) 12...g5 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 h6 (not 14...♘d7?! 15 ♗g4! ♘e5 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♕h5 ♘d3? 18 ♗xg5 ♕d7 19 ♗h6 ♗f6 20 ♕f3 1-0 Henley-Grünfeld, Lone Pine 1981) 15 ♖b1 b6 16 b4 ♘d7 with the idea of ...c5xb4 and ...♗a6 when Black is fine (Hardicsay). As usual the exchange of knights has freed Black's position.

b) 12 ♖a3 g5 13 ♖e1 ♘g6 14 ♗b5 ♖e7!? (this looks awkward, but Black is soon able to make use of it to double rooks on the e-file) 15 ♘f1 a6 16 ♗c4 h6 17 ♘g3 ♗d7 18 ♗d2 ♕c7 19 ♕c2 ♖ae8 20 a5 ♘g4 21 h3 ♘4e5 and Black's pieces were very well co-ordinated in the game in Stempin-Suba, Prague Zonal 1984.

12...g5

In the game Black actually played 11...g5 12 ♖e1 ♘e5, but the game move order is much more common. Black cannot really do without ...g6-g5 as both 12...♘fg4?! 13 h3! ♘xf2 14 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 15 ♔g1 ♗xh3 16 ♘f1 ♘g4 17 g3 ♕h5 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♕c2, as in Vladimirov-Agapov, USSR 1984, and 12...♘h5?! 13 ♗xh5! gxh5 14 ♘f1 f5 15 ♘g3, as in Fominyh-Moiseev, Hartberg 1991, are in White's favour.



13 ♘f1

After 13 ♗b5 ♖e7 14 ♘f1 h6 15 ♘g3, as in Ftacnik-Womacka, German Bundesliga 1991, Black could have considered the unstereotyped 15...c4!?, when the white bishop on b5 begins to look out on a limb.

13...h6

The problem with 13...g4 here is that Black does not really have a way of following up on the kingside, e.g. 14 ♘g3 a6 15 ♗d2 ♖b8 16 ♕c2 c4 17 b4 cxb3 18 ♕xb3 ♘fd7 19 ♕a3 ♘c5 20 ♖eb1 and White had all the play in Pinter-Lawton, Balatonbereny 1983.

14 ♕c2

14 ♘g3 ♘g6 15 ♗d2 ♘f4, as in Stohl-Kindermann, Stary Smokovec 1986, was very similar to the main game, but again Black can consider 15...a6!?

14...♘g6 15 ♘g3 ♘f4

With the white knight way over on the kingside it might be appropriate to play on the queenside with 15...a6 16 a5 ♖b8.

16 ♗d2 a6 17 a5 h5 18 ♗f3 ♗h6

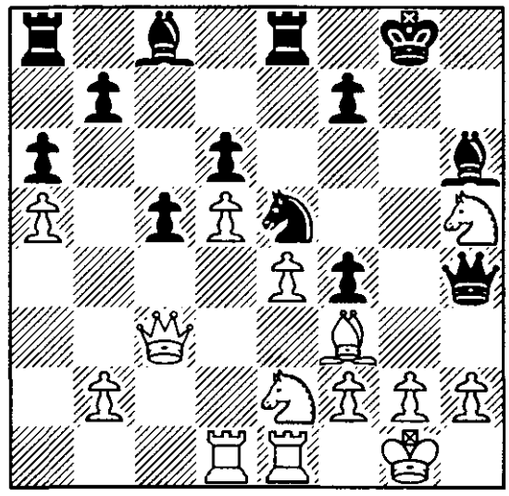
This pawn sacrifice looks somewhat speculative to me. Perhaps 18...h4!? 19 ♗xf4 gxf4 20 ♘ge2 ♗h6 and if 21 ♕d2 then 21...♘d7-e5.

19 ♗xf4 gxf4 20 ♘xh5 ♘g4 21 ♘e2

I am not sure that Black would have had enough for the pawn after 21 ♕e2 f5 22 ♗xg4 fxg4 23 f3.

21...♘e5 22 ♕c3 ♕h4 23 ♖ad1?

A very routine move which does nothing to help the stray knight on h5. After 23 g3!? fxg3 24 hxg3 ♕g5 25 ♘ef4 Black would still have had a lot to do to prove sufficient compensation for his pawn.



23...♗g4!

Now the protection of the h5-knight is removed and Black is able to storm through on the kingside.

24 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 25 ♘exf4 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔h1 ♕h4 27 ♔g1 ♕xh2+ 28 ♔f1 ♕h4 29 ♔g1 ♖e5 0-1

Game 21
Pinter-Brynell
Elista Olympiad 1998

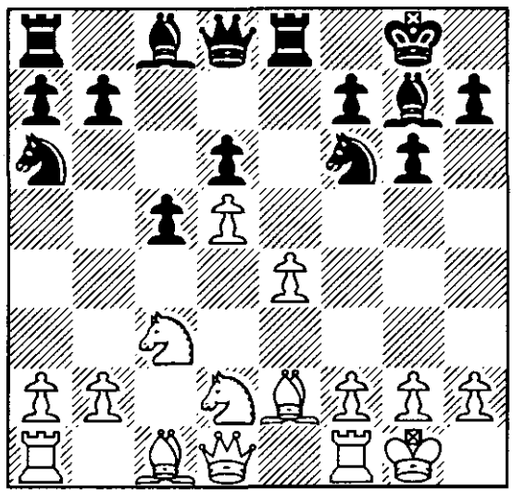
1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8

The immediate 9...♘a6?! is inaccurate because of 10 ♗f4! (10 ♘d2 transposes to Game 55 in Chapter 9) 10...♘c7 11 ♘d2 (11 a4 is also quite good) 11...♘fe8 12 a4 f5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 and now in Plachetka-C.Horvath, Stary Smokovec 1991, White could have played 14 ♗g3 ♗d4 15 ♘c4 with a promising game according to Psakhis.

10 ♘d2 ♘a6

This declares Black's intention to play

on the queenside with an eventual ...b7-b5.



11 f3

11 ♖e1 is less precise because of 11...♘c7 12 a4 a6! (in the main line this is undesirable because of 13 ♘c4 and 14 ♗f4), e.g. 13 ♕c2 ♖b8 14 a5 ♗d7 15 ♘c4 ♘b5 with good chances for Black in Makagonov-Antoshin, USSR 1959. The aggressive 11 f4 is considered in the chapter on the Four Pawns Attack (Game 25).

11...♘c7 12 a4 b6

This position is very similar to Game 55 in Chapter 9, except that here Black has already committed himself to ...♖e8, which he may wish to do without. Instead 12...♘d7 is rarely seen nowadays. After 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘e3 f5 15 exf5 (15 f4 allows Black the dynamic option of 15...♘f7 16 exf5 ♘h6, e.g. 17 fxg6? ♗d4 and ...♘g4) 15...gxf5 16 f4 Black has plenty of weaknesses. However, 14...b6!? is better, when 15 f4 ♘d7 16 ♗d3 ♗d4 threatens ...f7-f5 and 15 ♖e1 ♖b8 16 f4 ♘d7 17 ♘c4 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 ♘f6 put White's centre under great pressure in Donner-Letelier, Cuba 1964. White should probably settle for the safety-first 15 ♔h1 with a good game.

13 ♔h1

Although this waiting move is useful for White, 13 ♘c4 is probably more popular in practice, e.g. 14...♗a6 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗e3 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 17 ♕d2 ♔h7 18 ♖fe1! ♘d7 19 ♗f1 ♖b8 20 ♖ab1 b5 and now 21 b4 c4 22 a5 would have given White very similar play to the main game in Gaprindashvili-Sherbakov, Groningen 1998.

13...♖b8

Black carries out the normal plan of playing on the queenside. The alternative is 13...♘d7 (13...♗a6?! is bad because of 14 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 15 ♘c4 and ♗f4) 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♘e3 and now:

a) 15...f5?! 16 f4 ♘f7 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♗d3 and Black had only really weakened his position in Najdorf-Fischer, Havana 1966.

b) 15...♖b8 16 ♗d2 a6 17 f4 ♘d7 18 ♘c4 ♘f6 19 ♗f3 and White was threatening ♘xd6 and e4-e5 in Gligoric-Minic, Yugoslavia 1972.

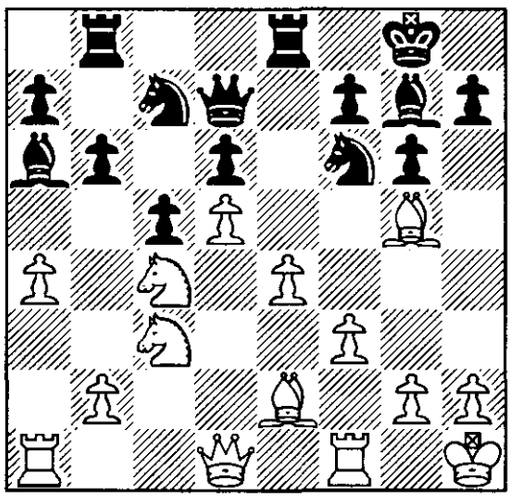
14 ♘c4

Previously Pinter had experimented with 14 ♗b5 on several occasions. However, after 14...♖f8! (not 14...♘xb5 15 axb5 with a bind on the queenside) 15 ♗c6 a6 16 ♖b1 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘e2 ♘d7 (18...♗d7 is also perfectly playable) 19 f4 f5 20 b4 ♘f6 21 bxc5 dxc5 22 ♕c2 fxe4 23 ♕xc5, as in Pinter-Lecuyer, French Team Championship 1991, Black could have played 23...e3!? with a very unclear game.

14...♗a6 15 ♗g5 ♕d7

15...h6 does not really help, e.g. 16 ♗e3! (after 16 ♗h4 the bishop is a little offside, so Black can safely break the pin with 16...♕d7) 16...♗xc4 17 ♗xc4 a6 18 ♕d3! ♕c8 19 ♗f4 ♖d8 20 ♖ab1 ♗f8 21 b4 ♘d7 22 ♕d2 ♔h7 23 ♗e2 ♘e8 24 b5 White had a massive grip on the position in Polugayevsky-Bouaziz, Riga Interzonal 1979. Psakhis suggests that Black may be able to improve with 16...♕e7! 17 ♕d2 ♔h7 18 ♖fe1 ♘d7 19 ♖ab1 ♗xc4 20 ♗xc4 a6 21 ♗f1 b5 22 axb5 (if 22 b4, as in the main game, then Black can consider

22...a5!?) 22...♘xb5 23 ♘d1 ♖b6 with equality in Veremeichik-Kapengut, Minsk 1982. In this variation 18 e5! ♗xc4 19 exd6 ♕xd6 20 ♗xc4 ♘d7 21 ♘e4 ♕f8 22 ♖ad1 looks rather scary, but Black may just about be able to hold everything together with 22...f5.



16 ♖e1!

White has a very imaginative idea in mind. After 16 b3 ♘h5 17 ♖c1 f6 18 ♗d2 f5 19 exf5 gxf5 Black had achieved some freedom for his pieces in Ivanchuk-Wahls, World Junior Championship, Adelaide 1988.

16...♗xc4

After 16...h6 White should calmly play 17 ♗e3.

17 ♗xc4 a6 18 ♗f1!

With the clever prophylactic idea of 16 ♖e1 and 18 ♗f1 White has ensured that 18...b5?! can be met by 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖a7.

18...h6

Another recent game went 18...♖b7 19 ♕d2!? (ignoring the 'threat' of ...b7-b5) 19...b5 20 a5! b4 21 ♘a4 ♖a7 22 ♘b6 ♕d8 23 ♖ac1 with a fantastic position for White in Se.Ivanov-Nedev, Paide 1999.

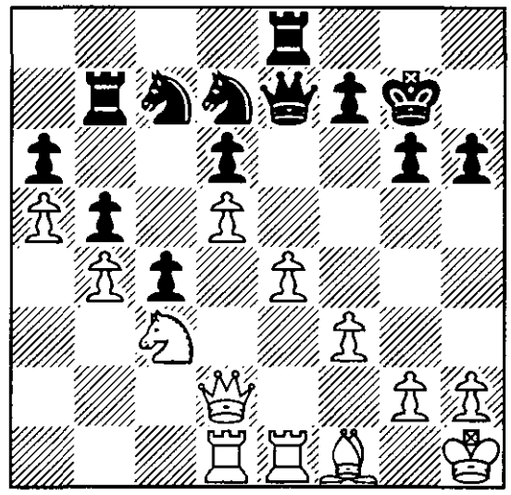
19 ♗e3 ♔h7 20 ♕d2 ♖b7

Black intends to play ...b7-b5, but without allowing the white rook to penetrate to a7. Instead 20...♕c8 21 ♖ab1 b5 22 b4 c4 23 a5 ♕d7 24 ♗d4 ♖e7 25 g3 ♖be8 26 ♖bd1 ♘h5 27 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 28 f4 was also fairly unpleasant for Black in Van der Sterren-Emms, German Bundesliga 1995/96.

21 ♖ab1 b5 22 b4 c4 23 a5 ♕e7 24 ♗d4

Obviously not 24 ♘e2? ♘fxd5.

24...♘d7 25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♖bd1



Although Black's position does not look to bad at first glance, closer inspection reveals that he has no counterplay whatsoever and is powerless to resist a slow but methodical build-up by his opponent. Ultimately White will be able to break through at will with either e4-e5 or f4-f5.

26...♕f8 27 f4 ♔h7 28 g3 ♖bb8 29 ♗h3 ♖bd8 30 ♖e3 ♕g7 31 ♖de1 h5 32 ♘e2 ♘f6 33 ♘d4 ♘g4 34 ♗xg4 hxg4 35 f5 gxf5 36 ♘xf5 ♕g6 37 h3 gxh3 38 g4 ♖e5 39 ♖xh3+ ♔g8 40 ♖h6 1-0

Summary

The fact that none of Games 13-17 date from later than 1987 reflects the fact that the variation with 9.....a6 10 a4 ♗g4 is highly unfashionable for White. Black seems to be able to achieve decent counterplay with ease, especially if he is able to exchange on f3.

The line with 9...♖e8 and ...♘bd7, as in Games 18-20, is far more complex and involves a certain amount of risk. Nevertheless, this also seems satisfactory if Black avoids ...a7-a6 and just gets on with it on the kingside.

I am less enthusiastic about 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 ♘a6 (Game 21) since this does not really present White with enough problems. By the time Black is ready to break with ...b6-b5 his opponent will have had plenty of time to arrange a suitable counter.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0

9...a6

9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 *(D)*

10...a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 – *Game 18*

10...♘bd7 11 a4 ♘e5

12 ♕c2 – *Game 19*

12 ♖e1 – *Game 20*

10...♘a6 – *Game 21*

10 a4 ♗g4 11 ♗f4

11 ♘d2 – *Game 17*

11...♗xf3

11...♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘h5 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 *(D)*

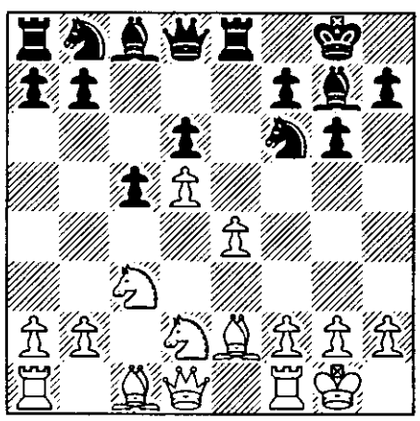
15 a5 – *Game 15*

15 g4 – *Game 16*

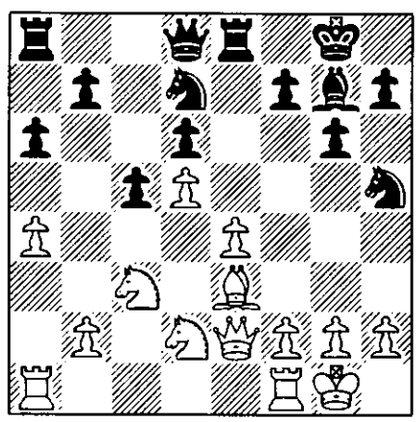
12 ♗xf3 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 ♘bd7 14 a5 *(D)* **h5**

14...♖fe8 – *Game 14*

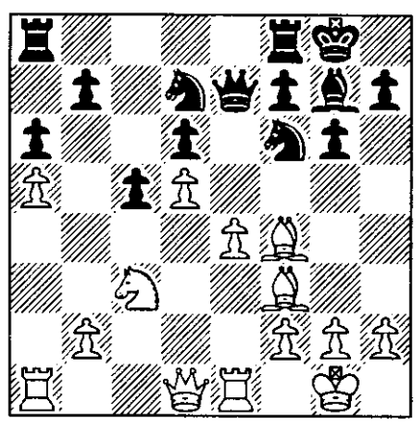
15 g3 – *Game 13*



10 ♘d2

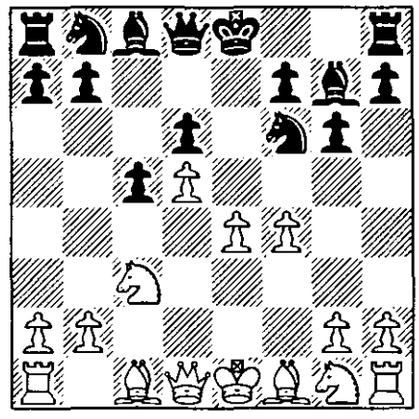


14...♘d7



14 a5

CHAPTER FOUR



Four Pawns and Mikenas Attack (6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7

In this chapter we shall be looking at two of the sharpest variations of the Modern Benoni: the Four Pawns Attack (after 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2) and the Mikenas Attack (after 8 e5). A third possibility from this position, the Flick-Knife Attack (8 ♗b5+) is the subject of the next chapter.

It is important to note that the Four Pawns Attack frequently arises from a King's Indian Defence (via 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 .cxd5), although of course Black has other possibilities in this move order, such as 6...♘a6.

In the Four Pawns White wastes no time in establishing a powerful pawn phalanx in the centre. If his opponent does not play actively then White will slowly develop his pieces and arrange a crushing breakthrough with e4-e5. Fortunately, all these pawn moves take time and Black is able to take advantage of this to develop his counterplay. The safest sequence is 9...♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7 (Games 22-24) when Black has brought all of his minor pieces into the game and will soon be able to strike out on the queenside with either ...b7-b5 or ...c5-c4 once the bishop on g4 has been exchanged for the white knight. Instead of 9...♗g4, 9...♖e8 is also playable, although Black must then reckon with the immediate 10 e5!? (Game 26) as well as the quieter 10 ♘d2. Finally, Black has the very direct 9...b5 (Game 27), although this is risky due to 10 e5.

The final game in this chapter deals with the Mikenas Attack, which is not particularly well regarded nowadays. Having said that, it has claimed numerous scalps over the years and is still dangerous if you are not well prepared. It is certainly worth memorising this line as the complications are difficult to solve over the board.

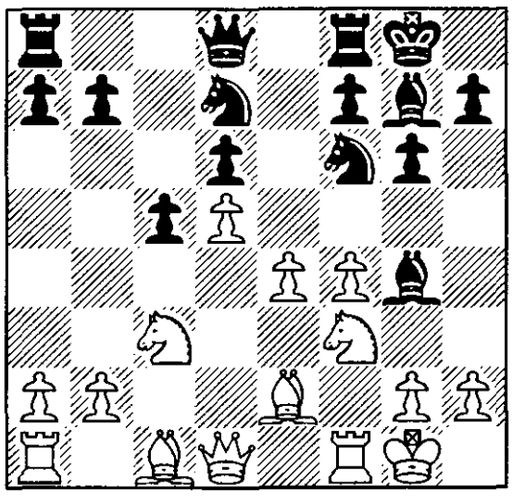
Game 22
Banikas-Kotronias
Korinthos open 1998

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7

see following diagram

This standard position frequently arises from the move order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7, as

indeed it did in this game.



11 ♖e1

White's other choices here are considered in Game 24.

11...♖e8

This move, putting pressure on the white centre and holding up e4-e5, is by far Black's most natural continuation, although other possibilities are seen from time to time:

a) 11...a6? is careless due to 12 e5! dxe5 13 fxe5, as in Kozul-Damljanovic, Belgrade 1989.

b) 11...♘e8 12 ♘g5! ♗xe2 13 ♖xe2 a6 14 a4 ♘c7 15 ♕d3 ♘f6 16 b3 b5 17 ♗b2 bxa4 18 ♘xa4 and Black had wasted too much time with his knights in Chabanon-Degraeve, Meribel 1998.

c) 11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘e8 13 ♖e2! ♘c7 14 a4 a6 15 ♕e1 ♖e8 16 ♗e3 with a very pleasant game for White in Vaisser-Al Modiahki, Tunis 1997.

12 h3

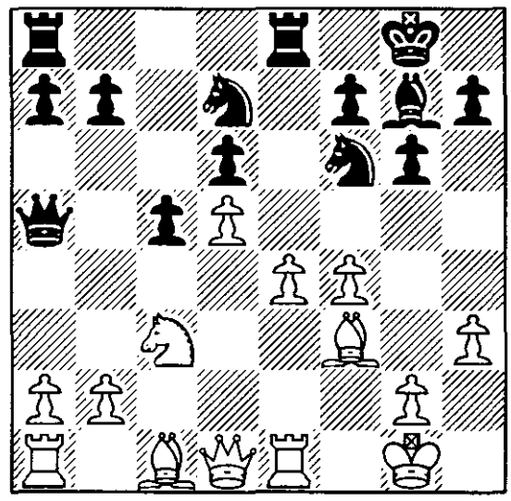
The only testing move.

12...♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♕a5

The main alternative, 13...a6, is considered in the next main game, while Black has also tried:

a) 13...♖c8 14 ♔h1! (Black was ready to meet 14 ♗e3 with 14...b5!) 14...a6 15 a4 c4 16 ♗e3 ♘c5 (16...♕a5 17 ♗d4 ♘c5 18 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 19 e5! dxe5 20 fxe5 ♘d7 21 e6 fxe6 22 ♖xe6 was also dangerous for Black in Cebalo-Zelenika, Pula 1999) 17 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♘d7 20 e6 ♘e5 21 exf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♘e4! and White's attack quickly broke through in Vaisser-Berelovich, Groningen 1993.

b) 13...c4 (if Black wants to play this idea he should preface it with ...a7-a6, a2-a4, as in the next main game) 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 15 ♗d4 ♘c5 (or 15...♖e7 16 b4! – Vaisser) 16 b4! ♕xb4 17 ♖b1 ♕a5 18 ♖b5 ♕a6 19 ♗xc5, as in Komarov-Strowski, Belfort open 1992, is in White's favour, though 18...♕a3 looks more resilient.



14 ♗e3

14 ♗d2?! c4 15 ♕b1 ♘c5 16 b4 cxb3 17 axb3 ♕b4 18 ♖a2 ♘fd7, as in Nguyen-Smirin, Paris 1998, was disgusting for White, and 14 a4 allows 14...c4, but 14 g4 is worth considering, e.g. 14...h6 15 h4 c4 16 g5 hxg5 17 hxg5 ♘h7 18 ♗e3 ♘c5 19 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 20 ♔g2 b5 with chances for both sides in Vaisser-David, France 1997.

14...b5!

14...c4 transposes to variation 'b' in the note to Black's 13th move, while 14...♖ac8?! is too slow, i.e. 15 g4! h6 16 h4 b5 17 g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 ♘h7 19 ♗g4 ♖cd8 20 e5 was tremendous for White in Vaisser-Kindermann, Biel 1991.

15 a3 ♘b6

This move leads to great complications. The following alternatives have also been tried:

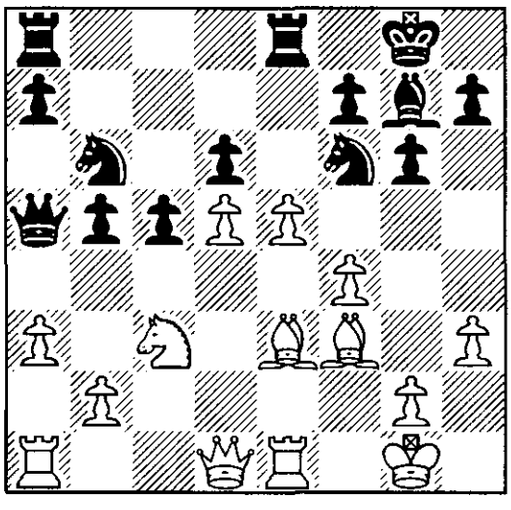
a) After 15...♖ab8 16 ♗f2! h6 Vaisser recommends 17 ♖e2 followed by ♕e1 and e4-e5.

b) 15...♖ac8 16 ♗f2! a6 (or 16...c4?! 17 a4!) 17 ♗g3 ♘b6 was too slow for Black after 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 in Elbilia-Grivas, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.

c) 15...b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4 17 ♕c2 ♘b6 18 ♗f2 ♘fd7 19 ♖e2 ♗d4 20 ♔h1 ♗xf2 21 ♖xf2 slightly favoured White in Lautier-Smirin, Cap D'Agde rapidplay 1996.

16 e5

16 ♗f2 is also very complicated after 16...♘c4 (16...♘fd7 17 ♕c2 b4 18 axb4 ♕xb4 transposes to note 'b' above) 17 ♕c2 ♘d7 18 ♗e2 ♖ab8! (threatening ...♘xb2)19 a4 b4 20 ♘b5 (20 ♗xc4? bxc3 21 b3 a6 22 ♖ec1 ♘b6 23 ♗f1 c4 24 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 25 bxc4 ♖b2 26 ♕d3 ♖d2 27 ♕f3 f5! was winning for Black in Kozul-Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1991) 20...♘xb2 21 ♘xd6 b3 22 ♕b1 ♘xa4 23 ♖a3 c4 (Vaisser prefers 23...♕b4 24 ♖xb3 ♕xb3 25 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 26 ♘xe8 'with an unclear position', while 23...♖ed8 24 ♖xb3 ♘c3! is also well worth consideration) 24 ♘xe8 ♗f8 25 d6 ♕b4 26 ♖xa4 ♕xa4 27 ♘c7 c3, as in Cebalo-Balcerak, Biel 2000, when 28 ♘d5 c2 29 ♕b2 ♗xd6 30 ♗g4 was probably White's best chance.



16...♘fd7!?

The black queen was very poorly paced after 16...dxe5? 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♗xc5 ♖xe1+ 19 ♕xe1 ♖e8 20 ♕f2 in Lalic-Zapata, Elista Olympiad 1998. However, 16...♘c4 is possible, e.g. 17 exf6 ♘xe3 18 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 19 fxg7 ♖ae8 (19...f5 20 ♕d2 ♖ae8 21 ♔f2 ♖3e7 22 g4! is very good for White - Vaisser) 20 f5 (after 20 ♕d2 Vaisser suggests 20...c4, but 20...b4 looks more natural to me) 20...gxf5 (20...b4 21 axb4 ♕xb4 22 ♕d2 ♕h4, as in Malinin-Blokh, correspondence 1993-96, looks risky after 23 ♘b5!?, but I am not really sure why no-one has tried 20...♔xg7!? to keep the kingside pawns intact) 21 ♕d2 and now instead of 21...b4?! 22 ♘e2 c4 23 ♘g3 c3 24 bxc3 bxc3 25 ♕c2 with a clear plus for White in Vaisser-Yrjola, Helsinki 1991, Vaisser suggests 21...a6 22 ♖f1 ♕d8 when White's position is only slightly preferable.

17 e6 ♘c4! 18 exd7 ♖xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♘xe3 20 ♕e2

Or 20 ♕d3 b4! (after 20...♘c4? 21 ♖e1 Black was in trouble in Banikas-Agnos, Greece 1997) 21 ♘b5 ♗xb2 22 ♖e1 bxa3 23 ♖xe3 a2 24 ♖e8+ ♔g7 25 ♖xa8 a1♕+ 26 ♔h2 ♗f6 (Agnos) with an unclear position in which Black has two queens!

20...♕d8 21 ♕xb5

21 ♘xb5 ♕xd7 22 ♕xe3 ♕xb5 and 21 ♔h2 ♘f5 22 ♕xb5 ♘d4 23 ♕d3 ♕xd7 are both in Black's favour.

21...♖b8

21...♗d4 allows White to slip out with 22 ♔h2 ♖b8 23 ♕c6 ♖xb2 24 ♖e1!

22 ♕c6 ♖xb2 23 ♖c1 ♖b6 24 ♘b5!?

Totally uncompromising chess. 24 ♕c8 ♖b8 25 ♕c6 ♖b6 would have led to a peaceful conclusion, but would have meant missing out on a cracking finale.

24...♖xc6 25 dxc6 a6?

I am not sure what White had in mind after 25...♗f6, since 26 c7 (or 26 ♘xd6 ♕b6) 26...♕xd7 27 ♗b7 ♕xb5 28 c8♕+ ♔g7 leaves Black with a vicious counterattack.

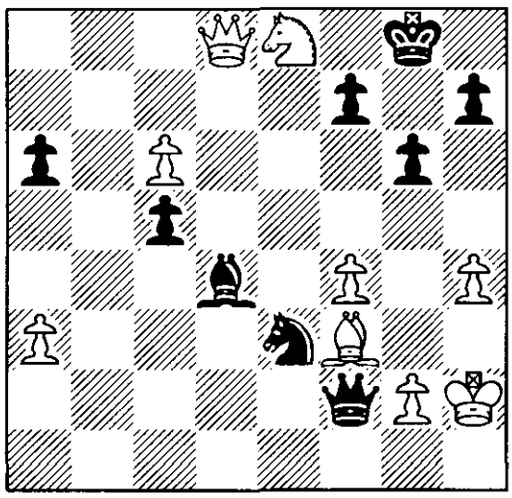
26 ♘xd6 ♕b6 27 ♘e8 ♕b2 28 ♖d1!!

A very attractive move.

28...♘xd1 29 d8♕ ♗d4+ 30 ♔h2 ♘e3?

30...♕f2 really would have forced a draw.

31 ♘d6+ ♔g7 32 ♘e8+ ♔g8 33 h4! ♕f2



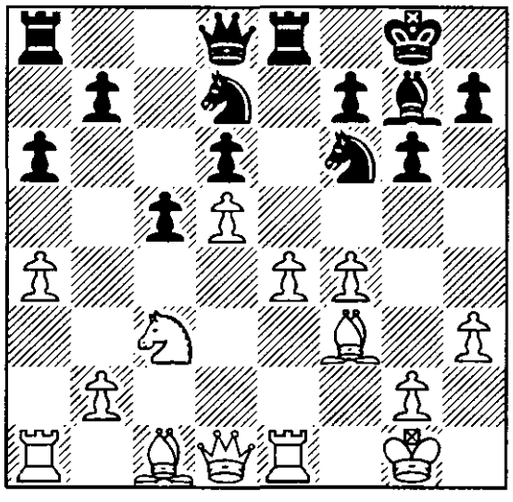
34 ♔h3!

White misses his chance with 34 ♘f6+! ♔g7 35 ♘h5+!! gxh5 36 ♕g5+ ♔f8 37 c7 ♘g4+ 38 ♔h3 and wins.

34...♕g1 35 ♘d6+ ½-½

Game 23
Lautier-Sutovsky
Tilburg 1996

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♖e1 ♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 a6 14 a4



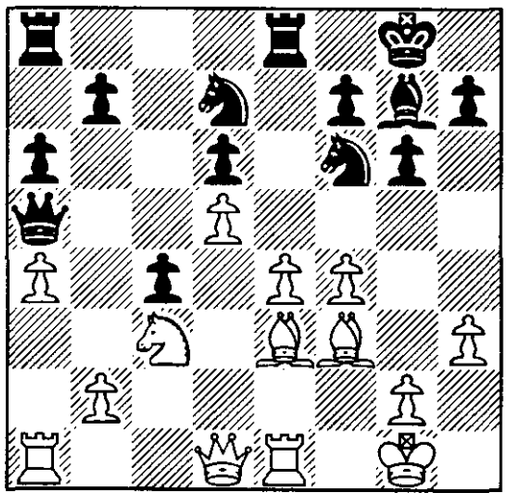
After 14 ♖e2?! b5 15 ♕e1 b4 16 ♘d1 ♘b6 White was already on the back foot in Bouaziz-Kotronias, Las Vegas 1999, but 14 g4!? is interesting, e.g. 14...h6 15 h4 ♘h7 16 g5 hxg5 17 hxg5 f6 with murky complications in Arakhamia-Brustman, Tuzla 1987.

14...c4

14...♖b8 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 looks too slow for Black after 17 ♖e2, as in D.Bischoff-Reis, Binz 1994, while Black would also have been struggling after 14...♖c8 15 ♗e3 ♕c7 in Siegmund-Lau, Dresden 1998, if White had continued in consistent fashion with 16 g4.

15 ♗e3 ♕a5

15...♕c7 16 ♔h1 ♘c5 17 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 transposes to the next note, while 15...♖c8?! 16 ♔h1 ♘c5 17 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18 e5! ♘d7 (or 18...dxe5 19 fxe5 ♘d7 20 e6 ♘e5 21 exf7+ ♘xf7 22 ♘e4 ♖a5 23 ♗g4 ♔h8 24 ♗e6 ♘e5 25 ♕d2 h6 26 ♖ad1 ♘d3 27 ♖f1 ♖xd5 28 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 29 ♘f6 ♗xf6 30 ♕xh6+ 1-0 Zsu.Polgar-C.Foisor, Tilburg 1994) 19 e6 resulted in a crushing victory for White in Alexandrova-Khomyakov, Alushta 1999: 19...♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♘f8 21 exf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♕d2 ♖c7 23 f5 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♕f6 25 fxg6+ hxg6 26 ♗g4 ♔g7 27 a5 ♖c5 28 ♕e2 ♖xd5 29 ♖f1 ♕d8 30 ♕f3 ♖d3 31 ♕f7+ ♔h6 32 ♕xc4 1-0.



The significant difference between this position and the one in the notes to Black's 13th move in the previous game is

that with the inclusion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4 Black need not fear a timely b2-b4.

16 ♕e2

16 ♔h1 (to meet ...♘c5 with ♗xc5, when ...♕xc5 is no longer check) is probably more popular and now:

a) 16...♖e7 17 ♖e2! ♖ae8 18 ♗d4 ♘c5 19 e5 ♘fd7 20 e6 and White is better – Vaisser.

b) 16...♘c5! 17 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♘d7 20 ♘e4 (20 e6 fxe6 21 ♘e4 ♕b4! transposes) 20...♕b4! (after 20...♕e7 White can consider 21 ♘d6 – Vaisser) 21 e6 fxe6 (or 21...♘e5 22 ♘g5!? – Vaisser) 22 ♗g4! (not 22 dxe6?! ♘e5 23 ♕d6 a5!, as in Hensbergen-Reindermann, Bussum 1993) 22...♘e5 23 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 and Black is slightly better in this complex position.

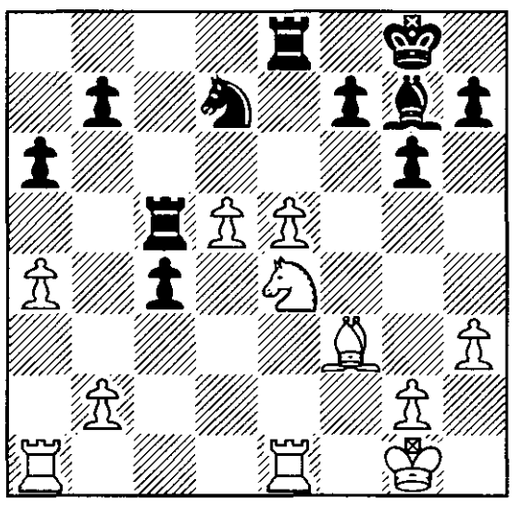
16...♖ac8 17 ♕f2 ♘c5

17...♖e7?! 18 ♖ad1 ♕b4?! 19 ♗d4 ♖ce8 20 ♖e2 b6?! was far too passive in Norwood-Westerinen, London 1988. White soon broke through with 21 ♕g3 ♘c5 22 e5 ♘fd7 23 e6 ♗xd4+ 24 ♖xd4 ♘f6? 25 f5 ♘b3 26 ♖f4 ♕c5+ 27 ♔h1 ♘c1 28 exf7+ ♔xf7 29 fxg6+ hxg6 30 ♕h4 1-0.

18 ♗xc5 ♕xc5

18...♖xc5 is worse after 19 e5 dxe5 20 fxe5 ♘d7 21 e6 fxe6 22 ♖xe6 (Lautier).

19 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 20 e5 dxe5 21 fxe5 ♘d7 22 ♘e4



After 22 e6 ♘e5 23 exf7+ ♔xf7 24 d6 ♘xf3+ 25 gxf3 ♗d4+ 26 ♔f1 ♖f5 Black easily won the endgame in Dearing-Plaskett, Hampstead 1998.

22...♖xd5?

Plaskett points out the major improvement 22...♖c7! 23 d6 ♖cc8 24 ♗g4 ♖cd8 25 ♗xd7 ♖xe5! (Lautier only considered 25...♖xd7 26 ♘c5) 26 ♗g4 f5 and Black is winning. The game move results in a very advantageous ending for White.

23 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 24 ♗xd5 ♖xe5

24...♘xe5 is no better after Lautier's 25 ♖e4! ♖d8 26 ♖f1 ♔g7 27 ♗xc4 ♖d2 28 b3.

25 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 26 ♗xc4 ♗xb2 27 ♖b1 ♗d4+ 28 ♔f1

28 ♔h1! ♘e5 29 ♖xb7 ♘xc4 30 ♖b4 (Lautier) was more precise.

28...♘e5 29 ♗e2 b5 30 axb5 axb5 31 g4 ♔g7 32 ♖b4?!

This is too involved. The simple 32 ♖xb5 ♔f6 33 ♔g2 ♔g5 34 ♔g3 would have kept out the black king.

32...♗c3 33 ♖xb5 ♔f6 34 ♔f2 ♔g5 35 ♔e3 f5?

35...f6 36 ♖b7 h6 would have probably secured the draw.

36 ♖c5 ♗b2 37 ♖c2 ♗a3 38 ♔d4 ♔f4 39 ♖a2 ♗e7 40 ♔d5 ♘f3 41 ♖a4+ ♔e3 42 ♗xf3 ♔xf3 43 gxf5 gxf5 44 ♔e6 ♗d8 45 ♖d4 ♗b6 46 ♖b4 ♗d8 47 ♖b8 ♗a5 48 ♖b5 ♗d2 49 ♖d5 ♗c1 50 ♖d1 ♗b2 51 ♔xf5 ♔g3 52 ♖b1 ♗d4 53 ♖b3+ 1-0

Game 24
Otano-E.Otero
Cuba 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 h3

Apart from the normal 11 ♖e1, a couple of other moves have also been tried for White:

a) 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♖e8 13 ♕f3 ♖c8! 14 ♔h1 (or 14 ♘c4 ♘b6) 14...c4 15 g4?!, as in Nogueiras-Cvitan, Novi Sad

Olympiad 1990, and now instead of 15...♘c5? 16 e5! Black should have played 15...h6! 16 h4 ♘c5 according to Vaisser.

b) 11 a4 ♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 c4 (13...♕a5 allows White the option of 14 ♗d2!?) 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 15 ♗d4 ♖e7! (preparing ...♖ae8; as usual, 15...♘c5 16 e5! favours White) and now:

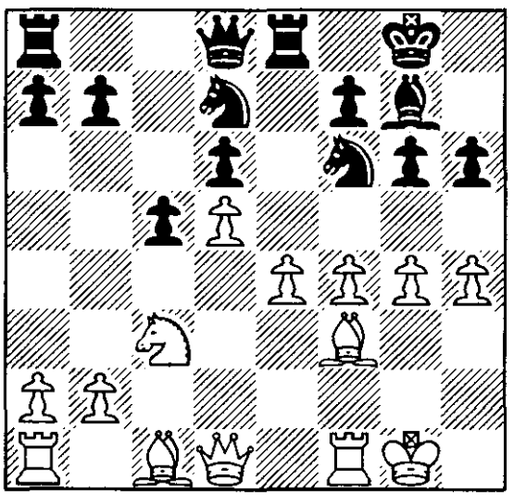
b1) Things went downhill fast for White in Kilpi-V.Gurevich, Kuopio 1995, after 16 g4?! ♖ae8 17 g5 ♘xe4 18 ♗xg7 ♘g3 19 ♗d4 ♘c5 20 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 21 ♖f2 ♖e3 22 ♔g2 ♘f5 23 ♗g4 ♖g3+ 0-1.

b2) 16 ♔h2! ♘c5 17 e5 ♘e8! with a complicated game in prospect in Hausner-Donchev, Pardubice 1994.

11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♖e8 13 g4

This exposes White's own king. He should settle for 13 ♖e1, returning to Games 22 and 23, or 13 a4 with a transposition to note 'b' above.

13...h6! 14 h4



14...h5!

Black's clever sequence is designed to open up the white king's position. After 14...b5?! 15 g5 b4 16 gxf6 ♘xf6 17 ♘e2 ♘xe4 18 h5 Black did not have enough for the piece in Scholseth-Moen, Norwegian Championship 1992, while after 14...♘h7 15 g5 hxg5 16 hxg5 a6 17 a4 ♖c8 18 ♗e3 c4 chances were balanced in Monin-Purtov, Budapest 1993.

15 gxh5?

One of the important points of Black's idea is that here 15 g5 can be met by 15...♘g4 and now:

a) After 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♗xg4 hxg4 18 ♕xg4 exf4 White's king was much more exposed than its black counterpart in Grivas-Timoshchenko, Plovdiv 1988.

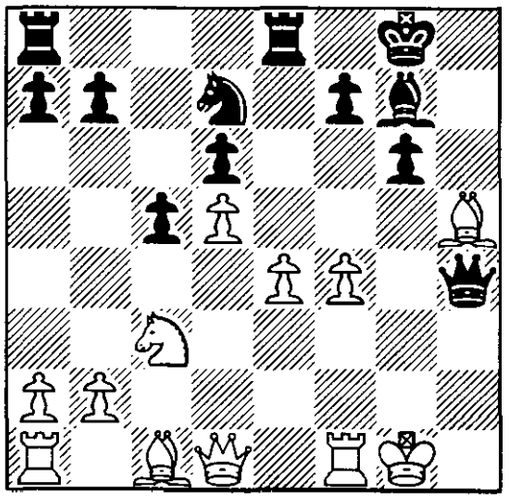
b) 16 ♗xg4 hxg4 and:

b1) 17 ♕xg4 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♖xe4 19 ♗d2 ♕e7 20 ♖ae1 ♘b6 21 ♕f3 ♖e8 22 f5 ♘xd5 23 fxg6 fxg6 24 c4 ♘e3 25 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 26 ♖xe3 ♕xe3+ 27 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 28 ♖f6 fizzled out to a draw in Bach-Trisic, Hamburg 1996.

b2) 17 ♖e1 ♕a5!? (or 17...c4 18 ♗e3 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xe4 20 ♕xg4 ♕e7 21 ♗f2 ♘c5 with complications in Kouatly-Kindermann, Trnava 1987) 18 ♗d2 ♘b6 19 ♕e2 ♕b4 20 ♘b5 ♕xb2 21 ♘xd6 ♖e7 and White had shot his bolt in D.Blair-T.Barnsley, correspondence 1997

15...♘xh5 16 ♗xh5 ♕xh4!

A massive improvement on 16...gxh5 17 ♕xh5 b5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♘xe5? 20 ♗h6 ♘g6? 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♕h7+ ♔f6 24 ♖f1+ ♘f4 25 ♖xf4+ ♔e5 26 ♕e4+ 1-0 Dekusar-Borulia, USSR 1990. After the game move White is in big trouble since if the bishop on h5 drops back then he will be subjected to a massive assault on the h-file by 21...♕g3+ followed by ...♗xc3, ...♔g7 and ...♖h8.



17 ♕g4 ♕xh5 18 ♕xd7 ♖ad8 19 ♕a4

Or 19 ♕b5 ♕g4+ 20 ♔f2 ♗d4+ 21 ♔e1 ♗xc3+ 22 bxc3 ♖xe4+ and wins.

19...♗d4+ 20 ♖f2 ♕f3 21 ♕c2

If 21 ♕xd4 then Black flicks in 21...♕g3+.

21...♔g7 22 ♕e2 ♕g3+ 23 ♔f1 ♖h8 0-1

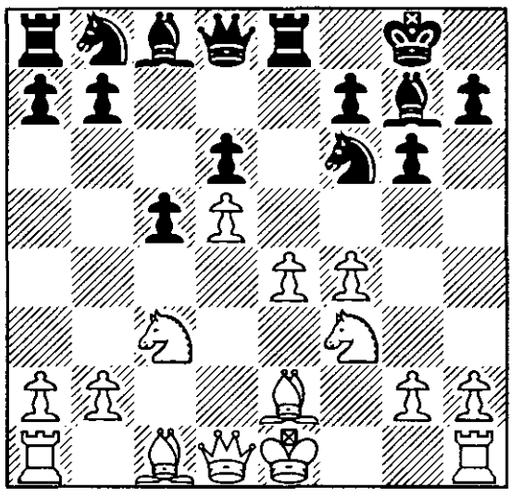
Game 25

Mikhalchishin-Kir.Georgiev

European Team Ch., Batumi 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♖e8

This is the main alternative to 9...♗g4.



10 ♘d2

The sharp 10 e5 is considered in the next main game.

10...♘a6

After the natural 10...♘bd7 (10...a6 11 a4 only helps White) 11 0-0 Black's most active continuation is 11...c4!?, when both 12 ♗xc4?! ♘c5 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 and 12 e5?! dxe5 13 ♘xc4 ♘b6! are more than satisfactory for Black, so White must play either:

a) 12 a4 ♘c5 13 ♗f3 (13 ♕c2?! allows 13...♘fxe4 and ...♗f5, while 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♘xc4 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘ce4 is also fine for Black) 13...b6 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♘xc4 ♖e8 17 d6 ♗e6! with a good game in Chernin-Granda Zuniga, Buenos Aires 1992.

b) 12 ♔h1 ♘c5 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 (or 14 ♘xc4 exf4! 15 ♗xf4 ♘ce4! 16 ♗f3 ♘xc3 17 bxc3 ♘e4 18 ♕b3 b6 with a level position in Dlugy-Vaisser, Havana 1985) 14...♖xe5 15 ♘xc4 ♖e8 (15...♖f5 16 ♗f4! leaves the black rook awkwardly placed) 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗h4 (17 ♗f4 ♘fe4! 18 ♘b5 g5 is nothing for White) and now the little explored 17...g5!? is worth considering, e.g. 18 ♗f2 ♘ce4 19 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 with good prospects for Black in Remon-Garcia, Havana 1991.

11 0-0

The actual move order in the game was 1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 g6 3 d4 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 d5 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♗e2 e6 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 ♘d2 ♘a6 10 f4 exd5 11 cxd5.

11...♘c7

11...♖b8 will probably transpose to the main game after 12 ♖e1! ♘c7 13 a4 b6.

12 a4

12 ♗f3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 (13 a4! b6 14 ♗f3 ♖b8 14 ♖e1 transposes to the main game) is not good enough due to 13...b5 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 e5 ♕d8 16 d6 ♘e6 17 exf6 ♗xf6 with a promising position for Black in Zilberman-Rechlis, Israeli Championship 1994.

12...b6

The point of White's move order is that he is ready to meet 12...a6 13 ♗f3 ♖b8 by 14 a5! ♗d7 15 ♖e1 ♗b5 16 ♘db1 with a slight plus for White according to Vaisser.

13 ♖e1

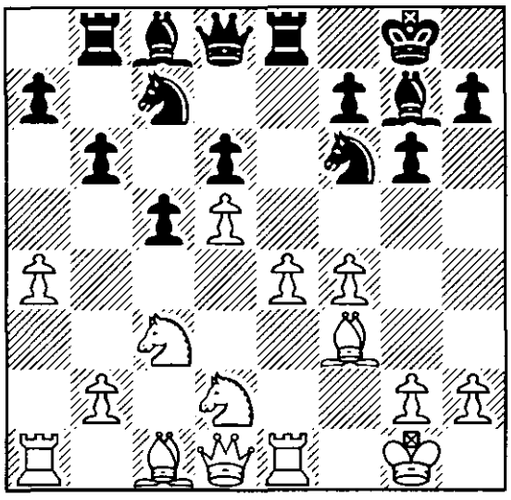
13 ♔h1?! ♖b8 14 ♗f3 ♗a6 15 ♖e1 is way too slow due to 15...♗d3!, e.g. 16 ♘f1 (or 16 ♕b3 ♘a6 17 ♘c4 ♘b4) 16...c4 17 ♗d2 a6 18 b4 cxb3 19 ♕xb3 ♘d7 20 ♘g3 b5 21 axb5 ♘xb5 22 ♘xb5 ♘c5 23 ♕a3 ♗xa1 24 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♖xa1 ♘xe4 0-1 Naumkin-Mrdja, Padova 1999.

13...♖b8

The immediate 13...♗a6!? is also playable, e.g. 14 ♗xa6 (it is probably best to play 14 ♗f3 ♖b8 transposing to the main game) 14...♘xa6 15 ♘c4 ♘b4 16 h3

♖b8 17 ♘a3 a6 18 ♖b1 ♕d7 and Black had equalised in Baburin-Suetin, Berlin 1994.

14 ♗f3



14...♗a6

The game Barrett-Povah, 4NCL 1999/2000, varied with 14...a6 15 ♘c4 b5 16 axb5!? (Vaisser prefers 16 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 17 e5 ♕d8 18 d6 ♘e6 19 axb5 axb5 20 exf6 ♗xf6, as in Kozul-Marovic, Toronto 1990, when White had a much improved version of Zilberman-Rechlis above) 16...axb5 17 ♘a5 ♗d7 18 e5 b4 19 exf6 bxc3 20 fxg7 cxb2 21 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 22 ♘c4 ♖b4 23 ♘xd6 ♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1 ♖xf4 25 ♕e5 ♖b4, and now instead of 26 ♘e4 ♘e8 27 h3 c4 when a draw was agreed, perhaps White should have centralised by 26 ♖e1 with ideas of 27 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 28 ♕e7+! and White's g7-pawn comes into play.

15 ♘db1!

This clever reorganisation promises White an advantage. After 15 ♘f1 ♗xf1 16 ♖xf1 a6 17 ♔h1 (or 17 ♕d3 ♕d7 18 h3 b5 19 axb5 axb5) 17...♘d7 Black was ready to roll his b-pawn down the board in Begovac-Wojtkiewicz, Bern 1991.

15...♘d7 16 ♗e3

Here 16 ♘a3 c4 17 ♘cb5!, as in Malich-Tringov, Sarajevo 1965, looks more consistent.

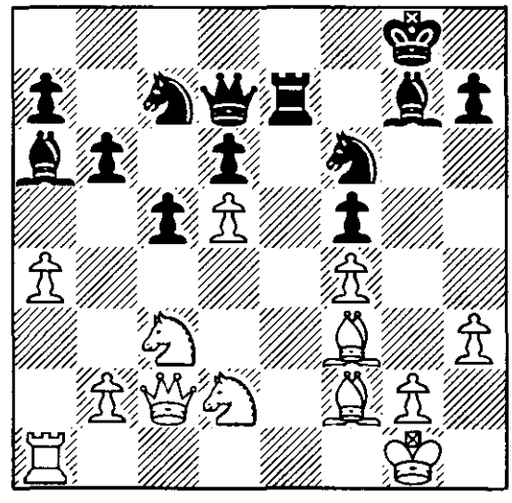
16...f5

The alternative 16...c4 17 ♗d4 ♗h6 18 g3 ♘c5 gave Black a good game in Lputian-Cabrilo, Manila 1990.

17 ♘d2 ♘f6?

This lets White off the hook. I am not sure what he had in mind after 17...♗d3, since 18 exf5? ♖xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♗d4 is obviously good for Black.

18 exf5 gxf5 19 ♕c2 ♕d7 20 h3 ♖e7 21 ♗f2 ♖be8 22 ♖xe7 ♖xe7



23 ♖d1

Mikhalchishin points out that 23 ♖b1 with the idea of b2-b4 was better for White. Black does not really have any counterplay and he will always be tied to the defence of the isolated f5-pawn. After the game move Black is able to relieve his cramped position with some exchanges. Although White retains the initiative, Black is eventually able to draw by creating counterplay with his bishops.

23...♖e8 24 b3 b5 25 axb5 ♘xb5 26 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 27 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 28 ♗xe1 ♕e7 29 ♗f2 ♗d7 30 ♕d3 ♗h6 31 g3 ♗g7 32 ♔g2 ♗c8 33 ♕c4 a5 34 ♕d3 ♗d7 35 ♘c4 ♘e4 36 ♘xa5 ♘xf2 37 ♔xf2 ♗d4+ 38 ♔f1 ♗b5 39 ♕xb5 ♕e3 40 ♕b8+ ♔g7 41 ♕c7+ ♔h8 42 ♕d8+ ♔g7 ½-½

Game 26

T.Bennett-Vogt

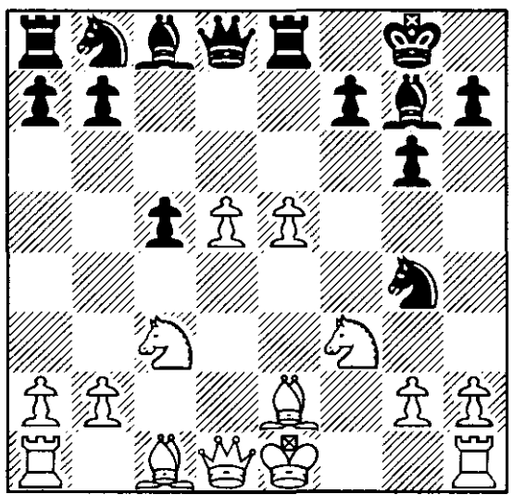
Neuchatel 1998

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5

f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♖e8 10 e5!?

10 0-0!? looks like a blunder, but after 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♗d3 ♖e8 13 f5 Black must be very careful, e.g. 13...♘d7 14 ♘g5 ♘e5! (14...♘f6 15 fxg6 fxg6 16 ♕a4 is quite dangerous for Black) 15 ♗c2 h6 16 fxg6 fxg6! and Black repelled the attack in Bereolos-Oestrei, USA 1993.

10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4



12 ♗g5

In view of the fact that the main line seems to be okay for Black, 12 0-0 ♘xe5 13 ♗f4 has recently become quite fashionable for White:

a) 13...♘bd7 14 d6 and now:

a1) 14...♕b6 15 ♗b5! c4+! 16 ♔h1 ♘d3 17 ♗xc4 ♘xf4 18 ♘g5 ♘e5! 19 ♖xf4 ♘xc4 20 ♖xc4 and White was slightly better in Vaisser-Nataf, French Team Championship.

a2) 14...♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♘e5 (not 15...♘f8 16 ♕d2 ♘e6 17 ♗g3 ♕g5 18 d7 ♗xd7 19 ♕xd7 ♖ed8 20 ♕xb7 h5 21 ♗d5 ♗xc3 22 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 23 bxc3 1-0 Vaisser-Wohlers, Cannes 2000) 16 ♘c7 ♖b8 18 ♖e1 ♘c6! with a very complicated position in Lagontrie-Boulard, correspondence 1987.

b) 13...♗f5!? 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♕d2 ♘d7 16 ♖ad1 was satisfactory for Black in Vaisser-Renet, Brussels Zonal 1993, but since Vaisser is still playing the 12 0-0 variation one assumes that he has a major improvement lined up somewhere.

12...♕b6

12...♕a5 13 0-0 ♘xe5 14 d6 is probably slightly better for White than the main game, while 12...f6?! is bad because of 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕d2! ♗xg5 15 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 16 ♘xg5 ♘e3 17 ♔f2 ♗f5 18 h3 (18 ♘e6 is quite good for White) 18...h6?! 19 ♘f3 a6 20 g4 ♗d7 21 ♗d3 ♔g7 22 ♖ae1 1-0 Vaisser-Khalafian, Yerevan 1996.

13 0-0

It is worth exploring Blokh's 13 ♕d2!? ♘xe5 (or 13...♘d7?! 14 e6!) 14 0-0-0, when White has all of his pieces in the game. One possible defence is 14...c4!? 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗xc4 ♗g4 with a complicated position in Punteri-Vismara, Italy 1996, while the untested 14...♘bd7!? is also worth exploring.

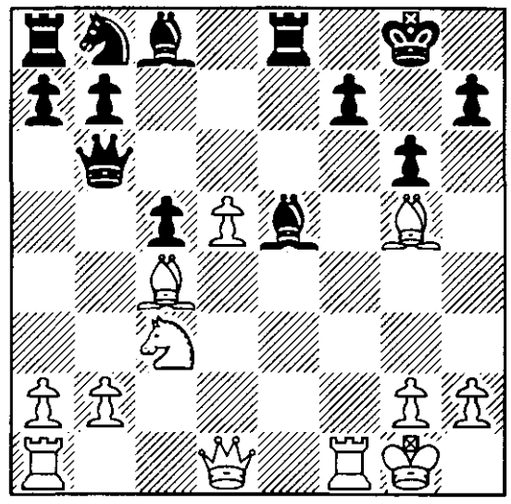
13...♘xe5 14 ♘xe5

14 d6 is also very complicated, e.g. 14...♗f5 15 ♘d5 ♕xb2 16 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 17 dxe7 ♘bc6 and now:

a) 18 ♖c1?! ♖e8 19 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 20 ♗b5 ♗e4 favoured Black in Barsov-Marin, Budapest open 1990.

b) 18 ♔h1!? ♖e8 (18...♘xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♕xa1?? fails to 20 ♗xc6! – Nunn) 19 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 20 ♗c4 ♘xe7 with plenty of compensation for the exchange – Vaisser.

14...♗xe5 15 ♗c4



Preparing d5-d6. 15 ♕d2 ♘d7 16 ♖ad1

♘f6 looks fairly solid for Black.

15...♕xb2

Black has a couple of other reasonable defences here:

a) 15...♗f5 16 ♘b5 a6! 17 d6 axb5 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♖xf5+ gxf5 20 ♕h5+ ♔f8 (not 20...♔e6? 21 ♕xe8+ ♔xd6 22 ♖e1! and White was winning in Wessman-Spasov, Tunja 1989) leads to a draw after either 21 ♕xh7 ♕xd6 22 ♗h6+ ♕xh6 23 ♕xh6+ ♗g7 24 ♕d6+ ♔g8 25 ♕d5+ ♔h8 26 ♕xf5 ♘c6 27 ♕h5+ ♔g8 28 ♕d5+ ♔h7 29 ♕f5+ ♔h8 30 ♕h5+ ♔g8 31 ♕d5+ ♔h7 32 ♕f5+ ♔g8 ½-½ Vaisser-Apicella, France 1996, or 21 ♗h6+ ♗g7 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕xe8 c4+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xd6 25 ♖e1 ♕f8!, as in Vaisser-Bauer, French Team Championship 1992.

b) 15...♕b4 16 ♕f3 ♗f5 (Black's kingside it terminally weak after 16...f5? 17 ♕d3) 17 ♗b5 (not 17 g4?? ♕xb2) 17...♖f8 18 ♗e7 ♗g4 19 ♕d3 ♕d4+ 20 ♕xd4 ♗xd4+ 21 ♔h1 with reasonable play for the pawn in Vaisser-Degraeve, Cannes 1990.

16 d6 ♖f8!

16...♗f5 resulted in an effortless win for White after 17 ♖xf5! gxf5 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♕h5+ ♔f8 20 ♗h6+ ♗g7 21 ♖f1 1-0 Verdier-Vasovski, Cannes 1997; 'effortless' because this had all occurred three decades earlier in Vaisser-Jaikovsky, Moscow 1967!

17 ♗xf7+ ♔g7

17...♖xf7 looks very risky, but the forcing line 18 ♕d5 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♗f5 20 ♖ab1 ♗xc3! 21 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 22 g4 ♗e4+ 23 ♕xe4 ♖xf1+ 24 ♔g2 ♖f7 25 ♕e8+ ♖f8 26 ♕b5 ♗d4 27 ♕xb7 ♘d7 28 ♕xd7 ♖f2+ 29 ♔g3 ♖af8 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 ♕d5 is assessed by Vaisser as a probable draw, which seems about right, e.g. 31...♖e2 (threatening ...♗e5+) 32 ♗f4 h6!? 33 d7 g5 34 ♗c7 ♖e3+ 35 ♔g2 ♖e2+ 36 ♔g3 ♖e3+ with perpetual check.

18 ♗d5

After 18 ♕d5? ♕xc3 19 ♖ad1 ♗f5 20 ♖f3 ♗d4+ 21 ♔h1 ♕xf3 22 gxf3! ♖xf7 Black was on top in Semkov-Marin, Berga 1990.

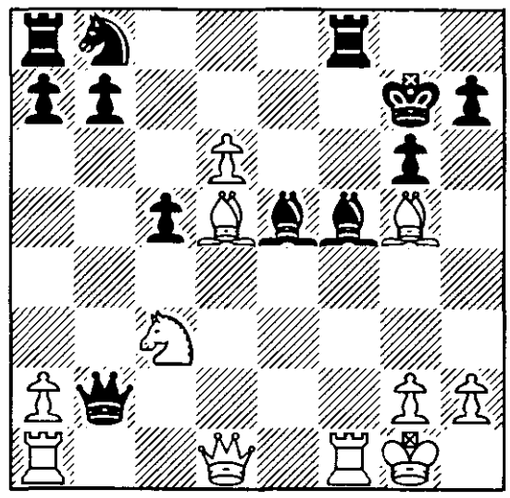
18...♗f5

Several other moves come into consideration here:

a) 18...♖xf1+?! 19 ♕xf1 ♗f5 is refuted by Vaisser's 20 ♖e1! ♕xc3 21 ♗xb7 ♗xd6 22 ♗xa8.

b) 18...♕xc3 19 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♕f1+ ♗f5 21 ♖d1! ♘d7 22 g4 ♔g7 23 gxf5 h6!, when the best that White can do is a perpetual after 24 ♗xb7 ♖b8 25 ♗d2 ♕d4+ 26 ♔h1 ♕h4 27 ♕g2 ♖xb7 28 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 ½-½ Kahn-Gladyszev, Budapest 1996.

c) Vaisser recommends 18...♘d7! 19 ♖xf8 ♘xf8 20 ♕c1 ♕xc3 21 ♗h6+ ♔h8 22 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 23 ♖f1 ♗d4+ 24 ♔h1 ♗f5 25 g4 ♗xg4 26 ♗xf8 when he suggest that White can probably hold the draw, though I reckon Black has good winning chances after 26...♗f5 27 ♗e7 ♔g7 28 ♗xb7 ♖b8 29 ♗d5 ♗f6.



19 ♕c1! ♕xc1

After 19...♕xc3 or 19...♗xc3 White can flick in 20 ♗h6+! ♔h8 (not 20...♔f6?? 21 ♕g5 mate) before exchanging queens and then capturing on f8 with reasonable compensation for the pawn.

20 ♖axc1 ♘c6 21 ♗xc6

Vaisser gives 21 ♘b5 as slightly better for White, but this seems incorrect due to

21...♗d3 22 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 23 ♘c7 (or 23 ♗xc6 bxc6 24 ♘xa7 ♗xd6 25 ♘xc6 ♖a8 when Black has all of the winning chances) 23...♗d4+ 24 ♔h1 ♗f5, when I do not believe that White has enough for the pawn.

21...bxc6 22 ♗e7 ♖fb8 23 ♘a4 c4

Vogt suggests that 23...♖b5 24 ♘c3 ♖b2 25 ♘a4 ♗d4+ 26 ♔h1 ♖xa2 27 ♘xc5 the game will peter out to a draw with 27...♗xc5? 28 ♖xc5 ♗e4 29 ♖g5 ♖d2, but after 27...♖e2! Black should be winning.

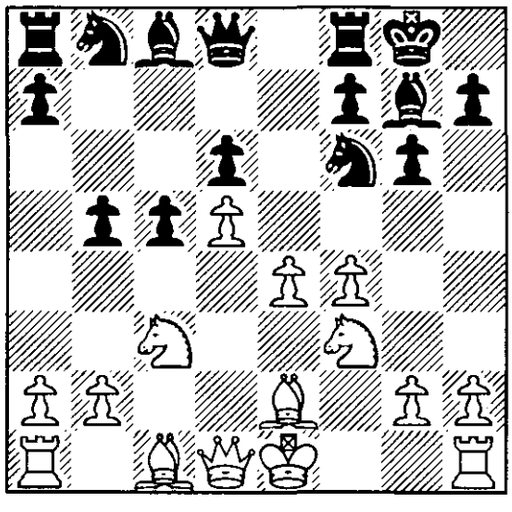
24 ♖fe1 ♗d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♗d3 26 d7 ♗f2 27 ♖e5 ♖b5 28 ♖xb5 ½-½

After 28...cxb5 29 d8♕ ♖xd8 30 ♗xd8 bxa4 31 ♗a5 Vogt says the game is equal. Although on the surface 31...♔f6 looks promising for Black, since the white king is temporarily shut out of the game, it is hard to envisage how he can ever arrange to push the c-pawn, though he could try to win one of White's kingside pawns with a slow squeeze.

Game 27
Lautier-Rogers
Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♗g7 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 b5!?

The sharpest choice in a very sharp variation!



10 e5!

In my view this move offers White at least a slight advantage. Neither 10 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 11 0-0 a6 nor 10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♔g2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕b6 promises much for White.

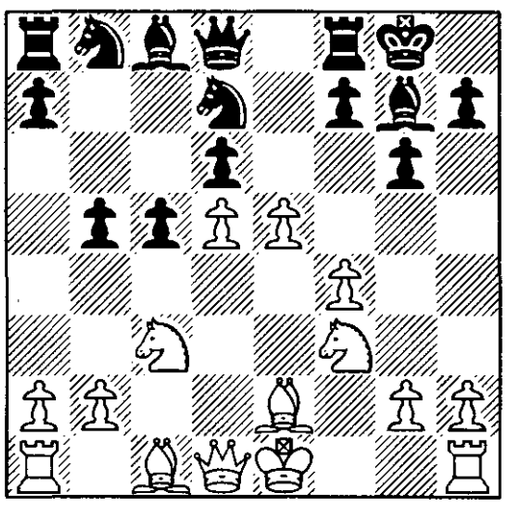
10...♘fd7

This treatment has become more popular recently since 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 ♗g5! seems good for White:

a) After 12...♕a5?! 13 0-0 ♘xe5 14 d6 ♗e6 (or 14...♘bd7 15 ♗e7) 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗f3 ♘d7 17 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 18 ♕f3 Black did not have enough for the exchange in Blokh-Veksler, USSR 1978.

b) 12...f6 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕d2 ♗f5 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘d1 ♘d7 17 ♘f2 was clearly better for White in Semkov-Tasic, Cannes 1989.

c) 12...♕b6 13 0-0 ♘xe5?! (13...c4+ 14 ♔h1 ♘d7 15 e6 fxe6 16 dxe6 ♘df6! 17 e7 ♖e8 18 ♕d4! also favours White, although this may be Black's best chance in the 9...b5 variation) 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗e7 ♘d7 16 d6 ♗b7 17 ♘d5 is very dangerous for Black, e.g. 17...♗xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♗xb2 19 ♖ab1 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 a6 21 a4! b4 22 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 23 ♗c4 ♕a7 24 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 25 ♖e1 ♗g7 26 ♗d8! 1-0 Chernyshov-Semeniuk, St Petersburg 1999.

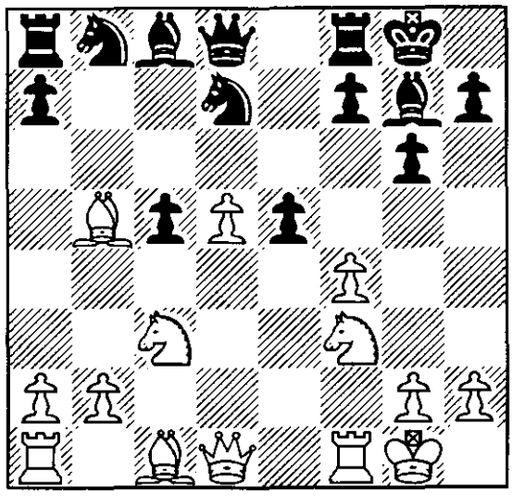


11 ♗xb5!

11 e6 is probably too ambitious due to 11...fxe6 12 dxe6 ♘b6!? 13 ♘xb5 d5 14

♘g5 ♕e7, when White is rather stretched, but A.Frolov's suggestion of 11 exd6 a6 12 f5!? is interesting, e.g. 12...♘e5 (12...♘f6 13 fxg6 fxg6 14 ♘g5 ♕xd6 15 0-0 is also slightly better for White) 13 fxg6 hxg6 14 0-0 ♗f5 15 ♗f4 ♘bd7 with a slight edge for White.

11...dxe5 12 0-0



12...♕b6

12...♗a6 is also met by 13 a4!, e.g. 13...♗xb5 (13...♕b6 transposes to the note to Black's 13th move) 14 axb5 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 (15 d6! exf4 16 ♘d5 was even better – Vaisser) 15...exf4 16 ♗xf4 ♘f6 17 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8?! 18 b6! and White was in complete control in Komarov-Frolov, Kiev 1995.

13 a4!

13 ♗c4 allows 13...♗a6.

13...exf4

After 13...♗a6 14 fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗h6 ♗g7?! 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 White had a dream position in Peng-Xie Jun, Groningen 1997.

14 ♗xf4

This is not bad for White, but Vaisser's improvement 14 d6! a6 15 a5 ♕b7 16 ♗c4 ♘c6 17 ♘d5 would have been even better.

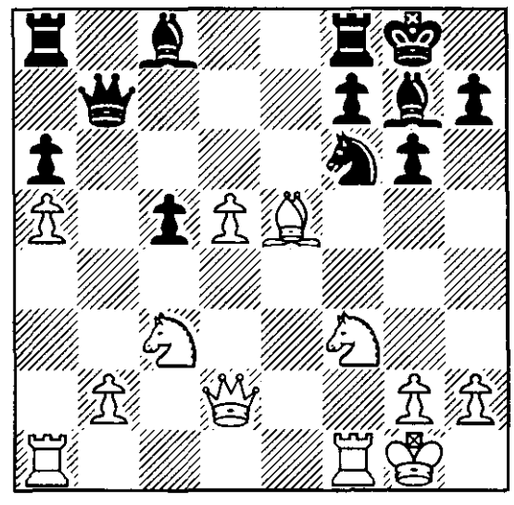
14...a6 15 a5 ♕b7 16 ♗xd7

Of course not 16 ♗c4? ♕xb2

16...♘xd7 17 ♕d2 ♘f6

17...♕b4 encourages 18 ♗h6, when White will soon swing his rook over to the kingside via a4.

18 ♗e5!



White's passed d-pawn guarantees him at least a slight advantage, especially since Black's c-pawn is always going to be vulnerable.

18...♗g4 19 ♖a4 ♗xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♕e7 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 d6 ♕e5

Black's best chance was 22...♕e6 23 ♘e4 ♗e5 (23...♗d4+ is asking for it with 24 ♖xd4! cxd4 25 ♘f6+ ♔h8 26 ♕xd4) 24 d7 ♕e7 (Lautier).

23 ♖e4 ♕g5 24 ♕xg5 ♗xg5 25 ♖e5 ♗c1 26 ♘a4! ♖fd8?

The critical error. Black's last chance was 26...♖ab8 27 b3 ♖fd8, though after 28 ♖d3! (28 ♖xc5 ♗a3 29 ♖c7 ♗xd6 30 ♖cxf7 ♖xb3 31 ♖xb3 ♔xf7 32 ♖b6 is not clearly winning) Black's c-pawn will probably drop off in the end.

27 ♖xc5 ♗d2 28 ♖d5 ♗b4 29 d7 ♖a7 30 ♖b3 ♗e7 31 ♘b6 ♔f8 32 ♖c3 1-0

Game 28

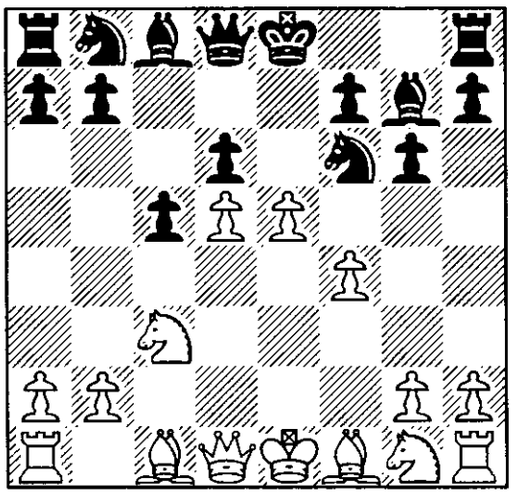
Yuferov-Kapengut

USSR 1976

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 e5

see following diagram

The so-called Mikenas Attack, White's most direct variation of the whole Modern Benoni.



8...♘fd7!

8...♘h5?! transposes to the note to Black's 8th move in Game 36 after 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7, and 8...dxe5?! 9 fxe5 ♘fd7 is very risky after 10 e6 fxe6 11 dxe6 ♕e7 12 ♘d5 ♕xe6+ 13 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 14 ♗xe2, when the threat of ♘c7+ is very hard to meet, e.g. 14...0-0 15 ♘c7 ♘c6 16 ♘xa8 ♘b4 17 ♔d1 ♘e5 18 ♗d2 ♘bd3 19 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 20 ♔e2 and it appears that White can beat off the black attack.

9 ♘e4

9 ♘b5 dxe5 10 ♘d6+ comes to the same thing, while 9 exd6 0-0 is harmless and 9 e6 fxe6 10 dxe6 ♘b6! favours Black.

9...dxe5 10 ♘d6+ ♔e7!

10...♔f8 leaves the rook on h8 out of the game after 11 ♘f3!

11 ♘xc8+

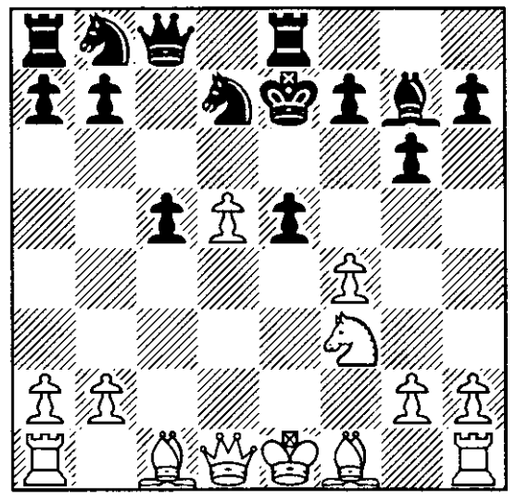
Naturally 11 ♘b5 is met by 11...♖e8!, e.g. 12 d6+ ♔f8 13 ♘c7 exf4+ 14 ♘xe8 ♕xe8+ 15 ♗e2 ♘e5 16 ♗xf4 ♘bc6 17 ♘h3 ♗xh3 18 gxh3 ♘f3+ 19 ♔f2 ♕e4 20 ♗xf3 ♕xf4 21 ♔g2 ♘d4 22 ♖c1 ♘f5 0-1 Smirnov-Kapengut, Minsk 1979.

11...♕xc8 12 ♘f3

12 d6+ allows Black use of the c6-square, i.e. 12...♔f8 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 ♗c4 ♘b6 15 ♗b3 e4 and Black went on to win in Baumbach-Polugayevsky, Bad Liebenstein 1963.

12...♖e8!

It is very logical to centralise the rook. 12...e4 is more risky after 13 ♘g5, as 13...♖e8? fails to Vaisser's 14 d6+ ♔f8 15 ♕d5! However, Black can play 13...♘b6! (13...h6 14 ♘xe4 ♖e8 15 ♗e2 f5 16 ♘c3 was very pleasant for White in Möhring-Postler, Frankfurt 1977) 14 d6+ ♔f8 with far from unfavourable complications for Black in Kooiman-Povah, London 1976.



13 fxe5

The most well analysed move, although there are two other possibilities:

a) 13 ♗e2 ♔f8 14 0-0 e4 15 ♘g5 h6 16 f5 hxg5 17 fxg6 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 f6 19 ♗xg5 ♔g7 and Black managed to convert his material advantage in Meinsohn-Kirsch, Epinal 1986.

b) 13 ♗c4 ♔f8 14 0-0 and now:

b1) 14...e4 15 ♘g5 ♘b6 (15...h6? runs into Yuneev's 16 f5! hxg5 17 fxg6 ♘e5 18 d6! with a strong attack) 16 ♗b5 ♖d8 17 d6 (17 ♘xh7+?! ♔g8 18 ♘g5 is too slow after 18...c4!, as in Meszaros-Stefanov, Satu Mare 1987) and now 17...c4 (threatening ...♕c5+) 18 ♗e3 ♕f5 looks quite good for Black.

b2) 14...♘b6 15 ♗b5 ♖d8 16 d6 (after 16 fxe5 ♖xd5 17 ♕e1 ♘c6 18 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 19 ♕h4 ♔g8 20 ♘g5 h5 21 ♘xf7, as in Mikenas-Suetin, Yerevan 1962, Black has 21...♖e8!? ganging up on the e-pawn) 16...e4!? 17 ♘e5 (17 ♘g5 transposes to variation 'b2') 17...♕e6 and Black should be able to repel the attack.

13...♘xe5 14 ♗b5 ♘bd7 15 ♘xe5

Instead 15 0-0 ♔f8 (not 15...a6? 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 d6+! ♔f8 18 ♕d5 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♘f6 20 ♗h6+ ♔g8 21 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 22 d7 axb5 23 dxc8♕ ♖axc8 24 ♕xb7 ♗xb2 25 ♖f1 1-0 J.Littlewood-Povah, Morecambe 1975) 16 ♘xe5 simply transposes to the main game.

15...♔f8 16 0-0 ♖xe5!

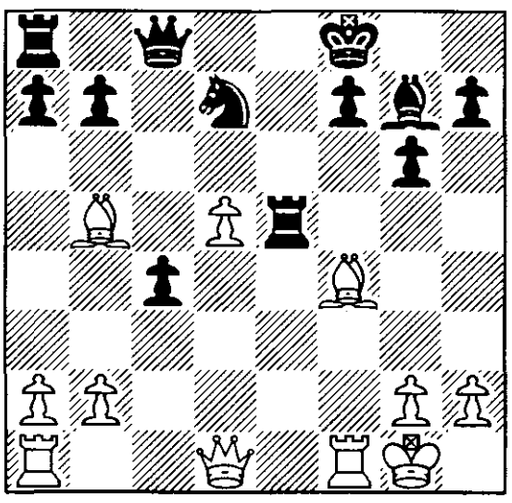
After 16...♗xe5? 17 ♕f3 f5 18 g4 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♘e5 20 ♕g2 ♖d8 21 gxf5 ♔g7 22 ♗g5 ♖d6 23 ♖ae1 Black was in trouble in Rajkovic-Planinc, Majdanpek 1976.

17 ♗f4 c4

This move, which was introduced by Kapengut, is often given an exclamation mark, but in fact it is not Black's only reasonable try:

a) The greedy 17...♖e4 18 ♕f3 f5 19 ♖ae1 ♖xe1 20 ♖xe1 a6 is playable if somewhat risky.

b) After 17...♖f5 18 ♗d6+ ♔g8 19 ♖xf5 gxf5, as in Curtin-Lobron, European Junior Championship 1979, Groningen 1979, Vaisser's suggestion of 20 ♕f3!? is worth considering, e.g. 20...♗xb2 21 ♖f1 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♘f6 23 ♗d3 with compensation for the sacrificed pawns.



18 ♗xd7?!

18 ♗xe5?! ♘xe5 19 ♔h1 ♕c5 20 ♗a4 ♖d8 (Kapengut) provides more than enough compensation for the exchange, but 18 ♕d4 is interesting. After 18...♖f5 (Black is also okay after 18...♖h5 19 ♕xc4 ♘b6 20 ♕b4+ ♔g8 21 ♖ac1 ♕f8, as in Astolfi-S.Kovacevic, Cannes 1989) 19 ♕xc4 (19 ♗h6? ♗xh6 20 ♗xd7 ♗g7 21 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 22 ♗xc8 ♖xf1+ 23 ♔xf1 ♖xc8 should be a won endgame for Black, although he fluffed it and only drew in Legky-Shvedchikov, USSR 1978) 19...♘b6 20 ♕xc8+ ♖xc8 21 ♗d6+ ♔g8 22 ♖xf5 gxf5 23 ♖d1 ♖d8 24 ♗c5 ♖xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♗xa7 ♗xb2 led to a drawn endgame in Schebler-Telljohann, Dortmund 1992.

18...♕c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xd5 20 ♕g4 f5 21 ♕h3

The tempting 21 ♗e6 is met by 21...fxg4 22 ♗d6+ ♔e8 23 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 24 ♖ae1 ♖e5 25 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 26 ♖e1 ♖d8 (Kapengut), although in this line White has some drawing chances with 35 ♗xc4.

21...♖xd7 22 ♕xh7 ♔f7 23 ♖ad1

The earlier game Sofman-Kapengut, USSR 1975, had gone 23 ♗h6 ♖g8 24 ♖ae1 ♖e7 25 ♖d1 ♕e5 and Black was also on top.

23...♖ad8 24 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 25 h4 ♕e7 26 ♗g5 ♕e2 27 ♖f3 ♕e5 28 ♖f1 ♕e2 29 ♖f3 ♖d1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 31 ♗f4 ♕e1 32 ♔h3 ♕e7?

Black loses the plot. Kapengut suggests 32...♕e6, but 32...♕e4 with ideas of meeting 33 ♔h2 by 33...♕b1 may be even stronger. Black still has winning chances after the game move, but gradually they slip away.

33 ♖e3 ♕c5 34 ♔h2 ♕d4 35 ♗e5 ♕xe3 36 ♕xg7+ ♔e6 37 ♕f6+ ♔d5 38 ♕d6+ ♔e4 39 ♕xd1 ♔xe5 40 ♕d7 ♕b6 41 ♕g7+ ♔e4 42 ♔h1 ♕b4 43 ♕f6 ♔e3 44 ♔h2 b5 45 ♕xg6 ♕xb2 46 ♕xf5 ♕d4 47 h5 c3 48 ♕g5+ ♔f2 49 h6 ♕d6+ 50 ♔h3 ♕d3+ 51 ♔h2 c2 52 ♕h4+ ♔f1 53 h7 c1♕ 54 ♕f6+ ♔e2 55 ♕e5+ ♔f2 56 ♕f6+ ½-½

Summary

The safest line for Black in the Four Pawns Attack is undoubtedly 9...♗g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7, when Games 22-24 demonstrate that he has good counterplay after either 11 ♖e1 ♖e8 12 h3 or 11 h3. 9...♖e8, as in Games 25 and 26, is also reasonable, although the positions after 10 e5 (Game 26) would not be to everyone's taste. Finally, 9...b5 is too ambitious in my opinion after 10 e5.

In Game 28 we saw that the Mikenas Attack with 8 e5 does not represent a viable attempt for an advantage.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7

8 ♘f3

8 e5 – *Game 28*

8...0-0 9 ♗e2 ♗g4

9...♖e8 *(D)*

10 ♘d2 – *Game 25*

10 e5 – *Game 26*

9...b5 – *Game 27*

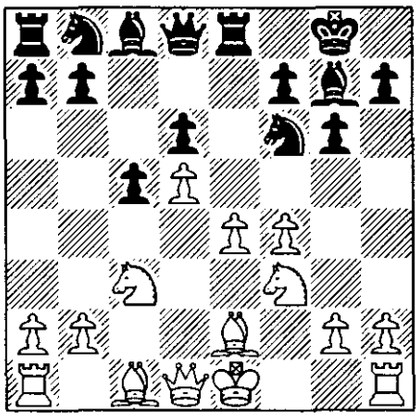
10 0-0 ♘bd7 *(D)* **11 ♖e1**

11 h3 – *Game 24*

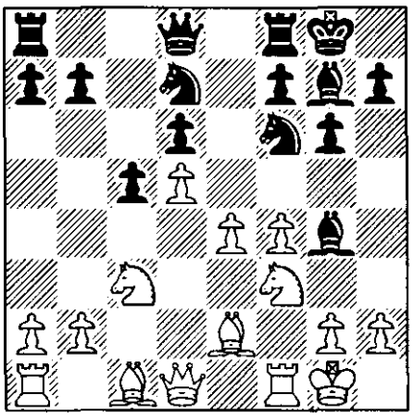
11...♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 *(D)* **♕a5**

13...a6 – *Game 23*

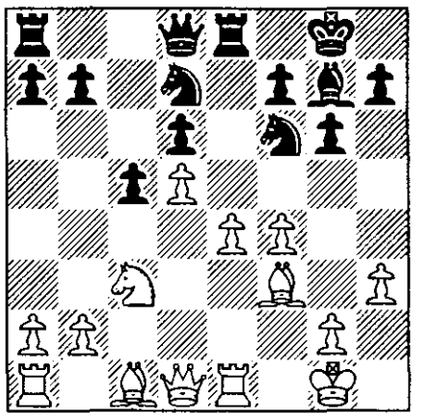
14 ♗e3 – *Game 22*



9...♖e8

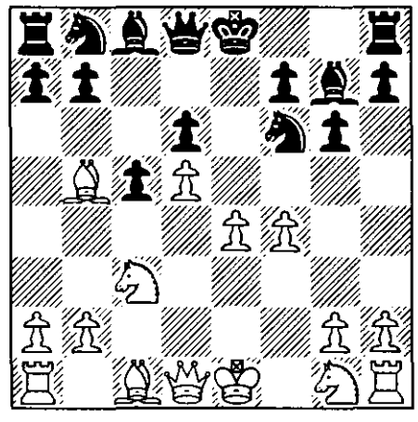


10...♘bd7



13 ♗xf3

CHAPTER FIVE



Flick-Knife Attack
(6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+

In this chapter we shall be taking a look at the so-called 'Flick-Knife' (or Taimanov) Attack, one of the most dangerous variations of the whole Modern Benoni. The Flick-Knife was christened as such, I believe, by Grandmaster David Norwood, and fully deserves its bloodthirsty name. Straightaway White presents his opponent with some serious problems to solve; if Black is careless then the white pawns will soon crash through in the centre, spearheaded by e4-e5. Indeed, such is the fearsome reputation of this line that many Modern Benoni exponents only adopt their favourite opening via the move order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5, when the Flick-Knife (and several of White's other dynamic alternatives) have been safely avoided by virtue of the fact that White has already committed himself to ♘f3. However, in that case Black needs another opening to play against 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3. Although the Nimzo-Indian (3...♗b4) and Queen's Gambit Declined (3...d5) are perfectly satisfactory openings in their own right, this is a book on the Modern Benoni and the Benoni is not for wimps! It is our job to take up the challenge and meet it head-on.

After 8 ♗b5+ Black must decide how to meet the irritating check. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to 8...♘fd7, when White invariably replies 9 a4 (9 ♗d3 is the subject of Game 35). As we shall see in Games 29-34 various treatments have then been tried for Black, though only 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7 (Games 31 and 32) has really stood up to theoretical tests. Finally, Game 36 deals with the sharp and very interesting 8...♘bd7, which implies a material sacrifice.

First, however, here is a salutary lesson in what Black should avoid at all costs.

Game 29
Kasparov-Cuijpers
World Junior Ch., Dortmund 1980

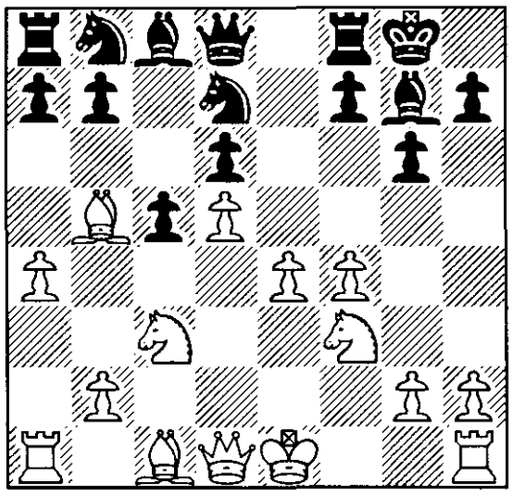
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4

The standard move, taking time out to prevent ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5. White's alternatives are discussed in Game 35.

9...0-0

9...a6 10 ♗e2! is likely to transpose to the main game.

10 ♘f3



10...a6?!

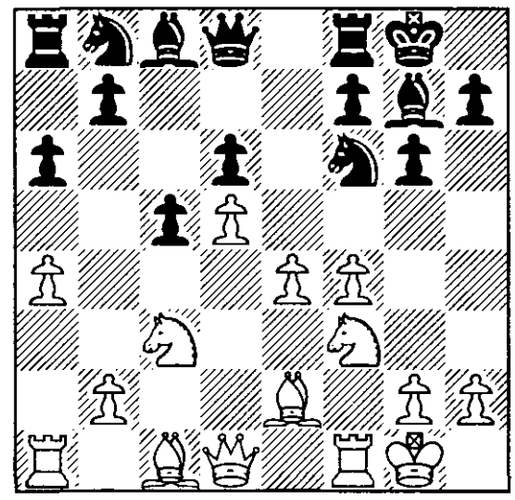
10...♘f6?! is no better than the game. After 11 0-0 ♗g4 12 ♖e1 ♘bd7 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 White had a dream position in Vaisser-Schalkx, Ostend open 1992.

11 ♗e2 ♘f6

The problem with playing ...a7-a6 so early is that after the bishop retreats Black no longer has the possibility of playing ...♘a6 and has to move the d7-knight again before he can even start thinking about his queenside development. Although 11...♖e8 12 0-0 ♘f8 has been tried quite a few times it looks far too ugly for words. Petursson-Perenyi, St John open 1988, continued 13 e5 ♘bd7 14 ♘g5! dxe5 15 f5! (a standard sacrifice: the e5-pawn gets in the way of Black's pieces and White has in mind to eventually plant a knight on e4, where it will dominate the board) 15...♘f6 16 g4 b5?! (a desperate attempt to complicate matters) 17 axb5 c4 18 ♗e3 and White was in total control.

12 0-0

Although this looks like a normal kind of position from the Four Pawns Attack (see the previous chapter) in fact this position greatly favours White as he has gained a whole tempo. White has moved his bishop twice to get it to the normal e2-square, but Black has spent three moves to locate his knight on f6. In such a sharp position the extra tempo is of vital importance and Black is already skating on thin ice. His next move only compounds the problem as the queen stands no better (and probably considerably worse) on c7 than on d8.



12...♕c7?

Both 12...♗g4 and 12...♖e8 can also be answered by the powerful 13 e5!, but at least they would have been a little more challenging than the text move.

13 e5

Why even consider anything else?

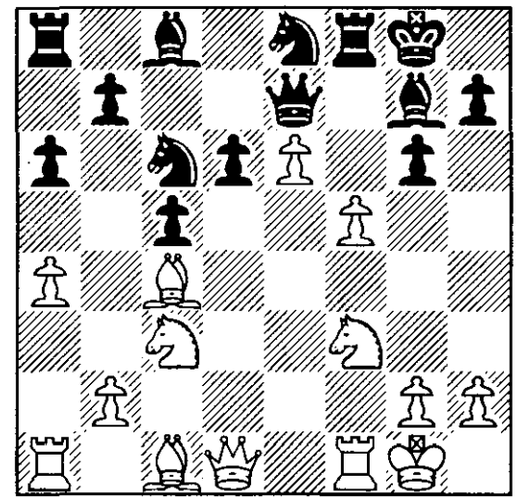
13...♘e8

13...dxe5 14 fxe5 simply opens more lines for the white pieces.

14 e6!

A temporary sacrifice which leaves White with a monster pawn on e6.

14...fxe6 15 ♗c4 ♕e7 16 dxe6 ♘c7 17 f5!



17...♘c6

Both 17...gxf5 and 17...♖xf5 are also met by 18 ♗g5 with a barnstorming attack.

18 ♗g5 ♗f6 19 ♘e4

More and more white pieces join the offensive.

19...♗xg5 20 ♘fxg5 gxf5

20...♖xf5 might have been more resilient, although it is hard to imagine that Black can survive in the long run.

21 ♘xd6 ♘d4 22 ♕h5

The entrance of the white queen is decisive. Black now elects to throw himself on his own sword by walking into a fatal pin, but his situation was hopeless in any case.

22...♗xe6 23 ♖ae1 ♖f6 24 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 25 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 26 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 27 ♕xf5 ♖e8 28 ♖e1 1-0

Game 30

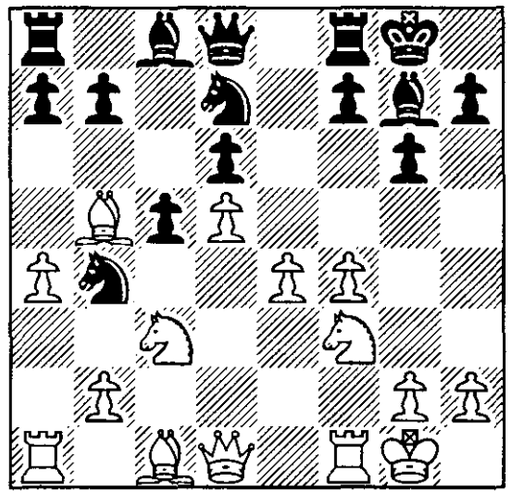
Komarov-S.Kovacevic

Massy open 1993

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 0-0

If Black is going to play the ...♘a6 line anyway, there is nothing much to be gained by delaying castling. After 9...♘a6 10 ♘f3 ♘b4 (after 10...♘c7 11 0-0 Black should also revert to 11...0-0, transposing to the main game) 11 0-0 Black should transpose to the next main game with 11...0-0. Instead Black tried 11...a6?! in Kasparov-Nunn, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, and received a typically energetic Kasparovian punishment: 12 ♗xd7+! ♗xd7 13 f5! 0-0 14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗f4 gxf5 16 ♗xd6 ♗xa4 17 ♖xa4 ♕xd6 18 ♘h4 fxe4 19 ♘f7 ♕d7 20 ♘xe4 ♔h8 21 ♘xc5 1-0 (21...♕xd5 22 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♘e6 wins material). It was games such as these in the early 1980s that put many people off the Benoni, and it is not hard to see why!

10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘b4?!



In some ways the b4-square is quite an attractive location for the black knight. It can never be dislodged from this outpost by a white pawn and will keep a watchful eye on the white d-pawn, thereby discouraging the e4-e5 breakthrough. However, I am rather suspicious of the b4-square myself. Black's main source of counterplay in this (and indeed many) lines of the Modern Benoni is the ...b7-b5 break. On b4 the knight does nothing to help achieve this important counter-blast. In fact, were Black to be able to play ...b7-b5 then the knight would simply stand in the way of ...b5-b4. For me, the knight belongs on c7 in this line (see the next main game).

12 ♖e1!

An important move, vacating the f1-square for the white bishop (and incidentally threatening 13 e5).

12...a6 13 ♗f1

13 ♗c4 would be careless due to 13...♘b6 followed by ...♗g4, when Black is starting to unravel.

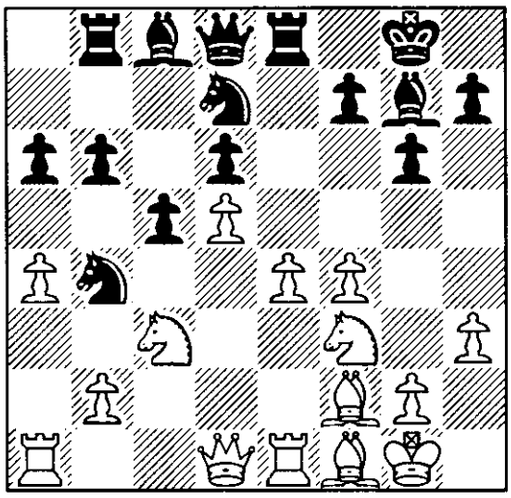
13...♖e8 14 h3!

Excellent prophylaxis. The careless 14 ♗e3?! allows Black to free himself with 14...♘f6. White must then take time out to defend the e-pawn, which allows Black time to place a piece on g4.

14...♖b8

After 14...♘f6 15 ♗c4 the threat of e4-e5 means that Black will probably be forced into the ignominious 15...♘d7, while if 14...♕c7 White continues with 15 ♗e3-f2 in similar fashion to the game.

15 ♗e3 b6 16 ♗f2



There is no need for White to hurry. He has a total grip on the centre and Black is a million miles away from achieving ...b6-b5.

16...♗b7 17 ♗c4

Having established that Black is never going to be able to play ...b6-b5, White brings the bishop back out to reinforce the d-pawn in preparation for e4-e5.

17...♗a8 18 ♕d2 ♗h6

After, for example, 18...♕e7 White can consider supporting the e4-e5 break with 19 ♗g3.

19 ♗e3 ♘f6?

This only encourages White to play his thematic breakthrough, but Black was starting to run out of sensible moves. Probably he should have sat tight with 19...♗g7, but it is hard to play positions like this which totally lack any prospects of counterplay.

20 e5! dxe5 21 fxe5 ♗xe3+ 22 ♕xe3 ♘c2 23 ♕h6

see following diagram

23...♘xe1

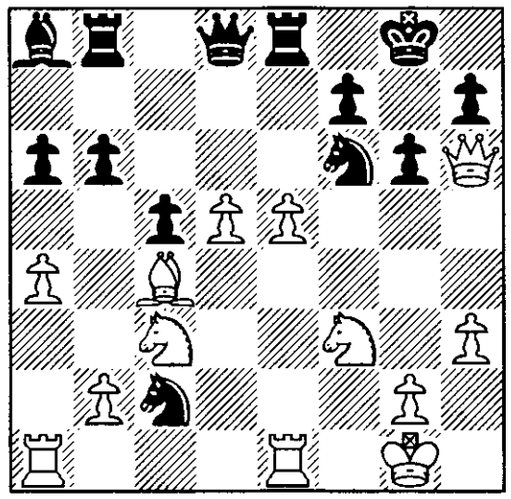
23...♘xa1 is calmly met by 24 ♖xa1.

24 ♖xe1 b5

Total desperation, but 24...♘d7 25 ♘g5 was equally hopeless.

25 axb5 axb5 1-0

26 ♗xb5 leaves Black in a totally lost situation.

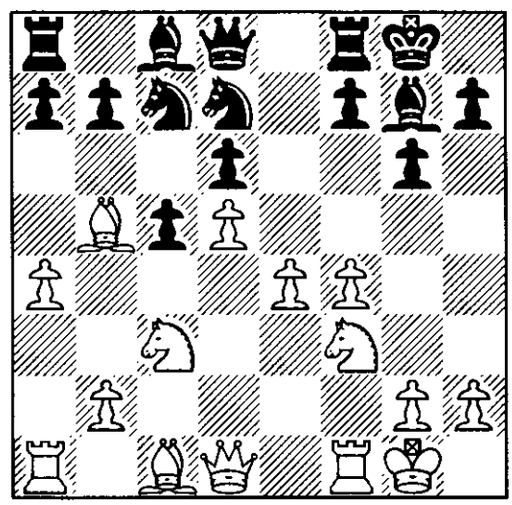


Game 31

Lalic-Kotsur

World Team Ch., Lucerne 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7!



12 ♗d3

One of the many advantages of 11...♘c7 over 11...♘b4 is that White does not have time to slide his bishop back to f1, but must instead decide where else it should go or whether to allow it to be

exchanged for a black knight. Various other moves have been tried:

a) 12 ♖e1 ♘xb5! (of course not 12...a6?! 13 ♗f1) 13 axb5 ♖e8 14 h3 a6 15 ♗d2 ♘b6 is more than satisfactory for Black according to Psakhis.

b) After 12 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 13 f5 (13 e5 ♗g4 leaves White looking over-stretched) Black is effectively a tempo up on Kasparov-Nunn in the notes to move nine in the previous main game. White was struggling to justify his pawn sacrifice after 13...gxf5 14 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗f4 ♘e8 in Chiburdanidze-Kotsur from an earlier round in the same event as our main game.

c) 12 ♗e2 looks a little too slow here, e.g. 12...a6 13 ♘d2 ♗d4+!? 14 ♔h1 ♘f6 15 ♗f3 ♖e8 with decent pressure on the white centre in Gavin-S.Kovacevic, Ibercaja 1997.

d) 12 ♗c4 a6! 13 ♖e1 ♖e8! is often dismissed due to 14 e5, but after 14...♘b6 15 ♗a2 ♗g4 Black had plenty of counterplay against the white centre in Mitra-Murshed, Calcutta 1988.

12...a6! 13 ♖e1

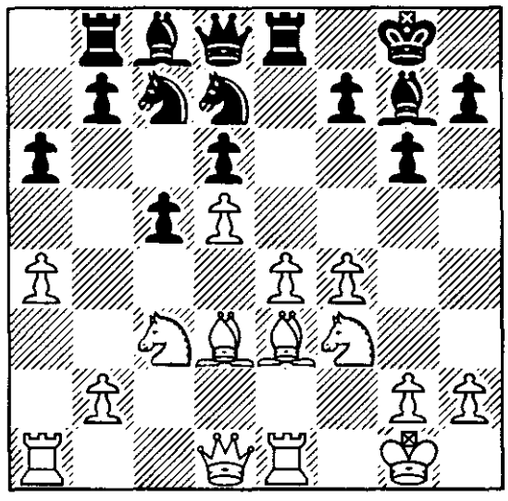
This move was criticised by John Nunn in his notes in the *British Chess Magazine*. He reasons that the insertion of ♖e1 and ...♖e8 is to Black's advantage. The white rook may in fact be better placed on f1, whereas the black rook is ideally situated on e8, from where it bears down on the e-pawn, especially as an e4-e5 d6xe5, f4-f5 sequence is very unlikely to be successful with the white rook on e1. White's alternatives here are discussed in the next main game.

13...♖e8 14 ♗e3

After 14 e5 dxe5 15 d6 ♘e6 16 ♘d5 exf4 White is going nowhere fast.

14...♖b8

Black is already well prepared to break out with ...b7-b5. In the game White tries to prevent his opponent from expanding on the queenside, but the b-file is far more useful to Black than the a-file is to his opponent.



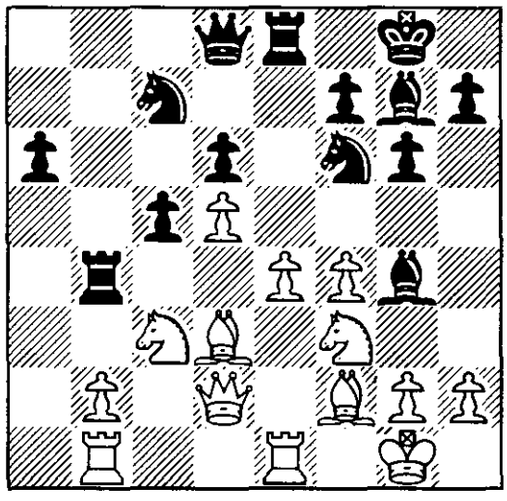
15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 17 ♕d2

17 ♕c2 would have kept a closer guard over the e-pawn, although Black should be fully equal after 17...♖b4.

17...♖b4 18 ♖ab1 ♘f6 19 ♗f2

Not 19 ♘a2? ♘xe4.

19...♗g4



Black has now fully mobilised his forces and his opponent is left wondering how to defend his weak centre pawns.

20 ♘g5 h6 21 ♘f3 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 ♘h5 23 ♘a2 ♖d4 24 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 25 ♔h1 ♕h4 26 ♗c4 ♘xf4 27 ♖g1

Or 27 ♘c1 ♗f2 28 ♖f1 ♘h3 29 ♕e2 ♘b5 30 ♘d3 ♘d4 31 ♕d1 ♗e3 and Black is in total control (Nunn).

27...♘h3 28 ♖g2 ♘f2+ 29 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 30

♘c3 ♖e5 31 ♖f1 ♗g3 32 ♖g1 ♗f4 33 ♕e2 ♖h5 34 ♖g2 ♕f6 35 ♘d1

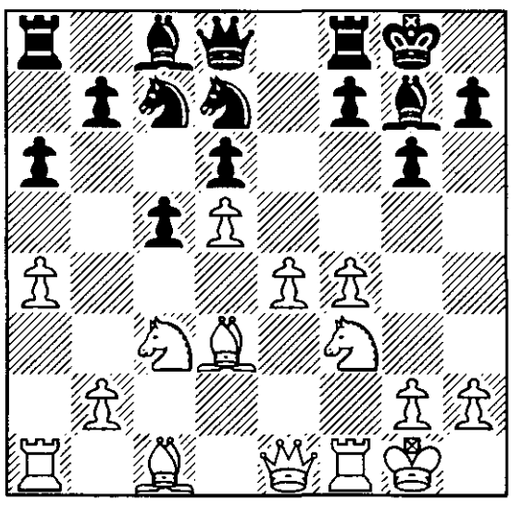
This allows the black knight to get to b5, but there was no way that White could have prevented this in the long run.

35...♘b5 36 ♗xb5 axb5 37 ♘f2 ♕d4 38 ♘d3 ♗e3 39 f4 ♕xe4 40 ♘f2 ♖xh2+ 0-1

Game 32
Gulko-Savon
Lvov Zonal 1978

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7! 12 ♗d3 a6 13 ♕e1

This is White's most direct response, planning to swing the queen over to the kingside. 13 ♖e1 was considered in the previous game, whilst 13 ♔h1 allows Black time to continue his planned ...b7-b5 break, i.e. 13...♖b8 14 f5 (or 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 with equality) 14...b5 15 axb5 ♘xb5 16 ♗g5 ♕c7!? 17 ♗xb5 axb5 18 e5 f6 19 exf6 (or 19 exd6 ♕xd6 20 ♗h4 gxf5 with an unclear position – Mih.Tseitlin) ♘xf6 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♘h4 ♘h7! 22 ♕d2 ♗f5 with a very complicated situation in Schranz-Mih.Tseitlin, correspondence 1985-88.



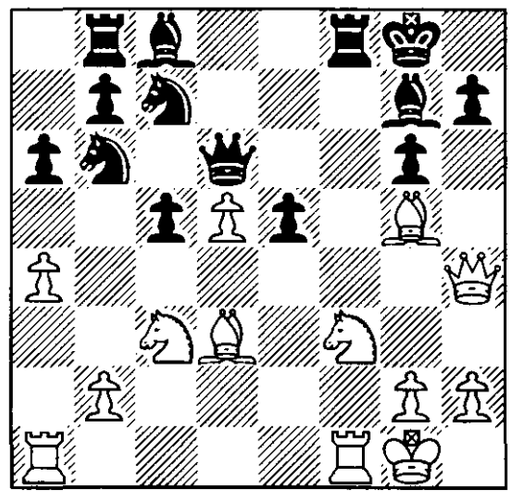
13...♖b8 14 e5

Although this is White's most aggressive continuation, it is not necessarily his best. It is also possible to take time out with 14 a5, e.g. 14...b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 (15...♘xb6 allows White time to play 16 f5) 16 e5 ♕e7!? (16...♖e8 17 ♕g3 dxe5 18 f5 looks very dangerous for Black) 17 ♕g3 (after 17 ♘e4 dxe5 18 d6 ♖xd6 19 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 Black has very good compensation for the exchange) 17...dxe5 18 f5 c4 19 ♗c2 (not 19 ♗xc4?? ♕c5+) 19...♗b7 and White may have shot his bolt. The rook on b6 does a good job defending the third rank.

14...♘b6 15 f5 dxe5 16 fxg6 fxg6

16...hxg6?! 17 ♘e4 is less satisfactory for Black.

17 ♗g5 ♕d6 18 ♕h4



17...♘cxd5?

Subsequently it was discovered that Black could have defended with 18...♘bxd5! 19 ♗c4 ♗e6 20 ♖ad1 ♕c6.

19 ♖ad1 c4 20 ♘xd5 cxd3

20...♕xd5 fails to 21 ♗xg6 ♕c5+ 22 ♔h1 hxg6 23 ♗e7.

21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 22 ♘xe5

Black's position now capitulates as 22...♕xe5 23 ♘xg6+ picks up the queen.

22...♗f5 23 ♖xf5 ♗xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♖f7 1-0

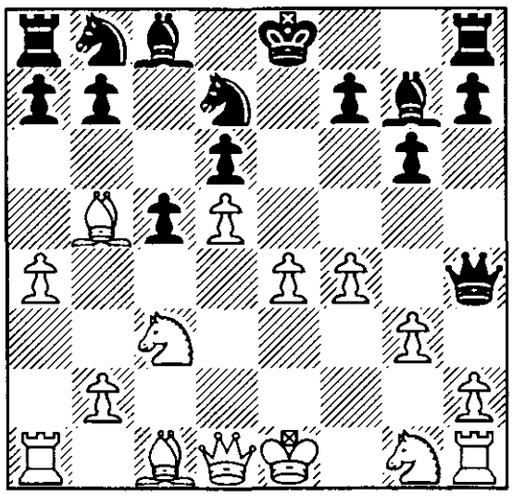
Game 33
Malaniuk-Fedorov
Kusadasi open 1990

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5

cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4 ♕h4+

A tricky check which is designed to create a weakness in White's kingside. Once White plays g2-g3 his opponent may be able to utilise the h3-square at a later juncture with ...♗h3 or simply place a piece on g4 without fear of being kicked away by h2-h3.

10 g3



10...♕e7

It is a moot point whether the queen should go all the way back to d8. On e7 the queen exerts some pressure on the white e-pawn, but the downside is that it is rather more exposed if White blasts through with e4-e5, since ...d6xe5 may then be met by d5-d6 gaining time for the attack by hitting the queen. 10...♕d8 is the subject of the next main game.

11 ♘f3 0-0

It looks far too risky to snatch the pawn with 11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕xe4+ 13 ♔f2 0-0, since after 14 ♖e1 ♕f5 15 ♗f1 ♘f6 16 c4 Black has serious long-term problems down the long dark-squared diagonal. This was graphically illustrated in the game Haro-Van Riemsdijk, Brazil 1997: 16...♕h5 (the queen soon finds itself cut off on this square) 17 ♗b2 ♘g4+ 18 ♔g1 ♘h6 19 ♕d3 f6 (a futile attempt to blockade the long diagonal) 20 ♕c3 ♘f5 21 ♖ad1 ♘a6 22 ♘g5! (the knight is immune from capture since 22...fxg5 23 ♖e7! ♘d4 24 ♖xd4 eventually leads to mate) 22...♘b4 23 ♘e4 (the f6-pawn is caving in) 23...♗d7 24 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 25 ♕xf6 ♖f8 26 ♕h8+ ♔f7 27 ♕f6+ ♔g8 28 ♕c3 ♗xa4 29 ♖e7 ♗xd1 30 ♕h8 mate.

12 0-0 ♘a6

12...a6 13 ♗d3 leaves Black a long way from completing his development.

13 ♖e1!

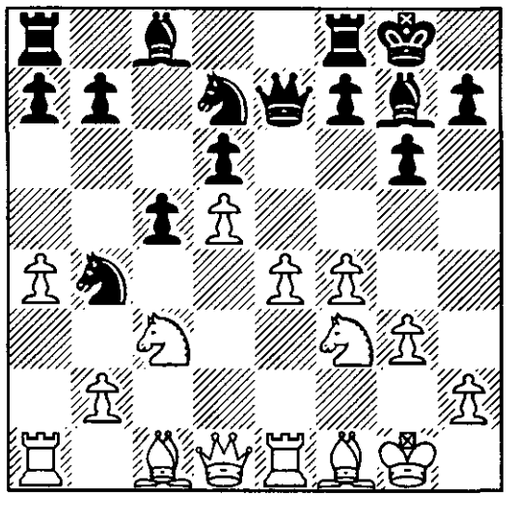
White can also try to blast through in the centre with 13 e5!? dxe5 14 d6 ♕d8 15 ♘d5, but this seems unnecessarily speculative. White has a strong grip on the position and can build up at leisure.

13...♘b4

Or 13...♘c7?! 14 ♗f1 and when e4-e5 comes the pawn will be immune from capture because of d5-d6 forking queen and knight.

14 ♗f1

Most books reject this line for Black on account of the quick game 14 e5 a6 15 ♗f1 dxe5 16 d6 ♕e8 17 fxe5 b6 18 e6 fxe6 19 ♗c4 ♗b7?? 20 ♖xe6 ♔h8 21 ♖xe8 ♖axe8 22 ♗f4 g5 23 ♘xg5 1-0 Tal-Velimirovic, Moscow Interzonal 1982. However, are things really so clear for White after 19...♘b8, intending ...♘8c6? Personally I would not care to play this position as Black, but a pawn is a pawn. In any case there is no need for White to hurry and Malaniuk's move looks perfectly natural.



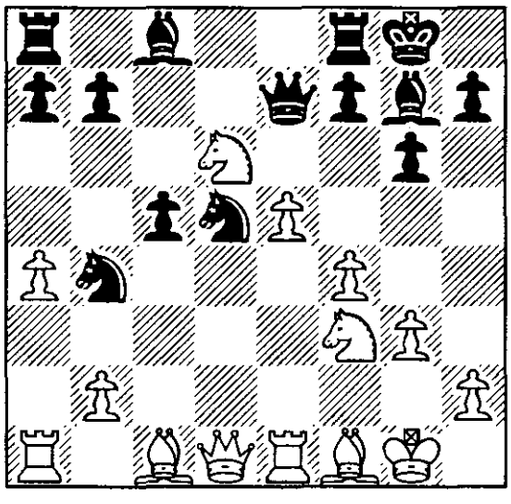
14...♖e8

After 14...b6 15 ♖a3 ♗b7 16 ♗c4 a6 17 h3 ♖ac8 18 ♗e3 ♖fd8 19 ♗f2 White had a very firm grip on the position in Yusupov-Pekarek, German Bundesliga 1992/93. Black's problem, as we have already seen in similar positions earlier in this chapter, is that he can never achieve the key ...b6-b5 and is left shuffling his pieces on the back two ranks.

15 ♘b5!? ♘f6 16 e5 ♘fxd5

16...dxe5 17 d6 and ♘c7 is obviously bad for Black, but after the text move White is able to establish a monster knight on d6. Whereas this piece is entrenched by the pawn on e5, its black counterpart on d5 lacks support from any of its pawns and can easily be dislodged. The pawn on e5 also does an excellent job restricting Black's dark-squared bishop.

17 ♘xd6 ♖f8



18 ♗d2 ♗e6 19 ♘g5 ♗d7 20 ♗c4 ♗e8 21 ♘ge4 b6 22 ♕b3 ♗c6 23 ♘g5

Suddenly Black has serious problems with f7-pawn due to the 'x-ray' attack by the queen and bishop along the a2-g8 diagonal.

23...h6 24 ♘gxf7 ♔h7 25 h4 ♖xf7 26 ♗xb4 cxb4 27 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 28 ♕xd5 ♖ff8 29 ♕e4 ♕e6 30 h5 ♔h8 31 hxg6 ♕g4 32 ♔g2 ♖ad8 33 ♖ad1 ♖d7 34 f5 ♕xe4+ 35 ♖xe4 ♖xf5 36 e6 ♖xd6

Black spitefully removes the monster knight from the board, but he might just as well have resigned straightaway.

37 ♖xd6 1-0

Game 34

Savchenko-Pigusov

Norresundby open 1992

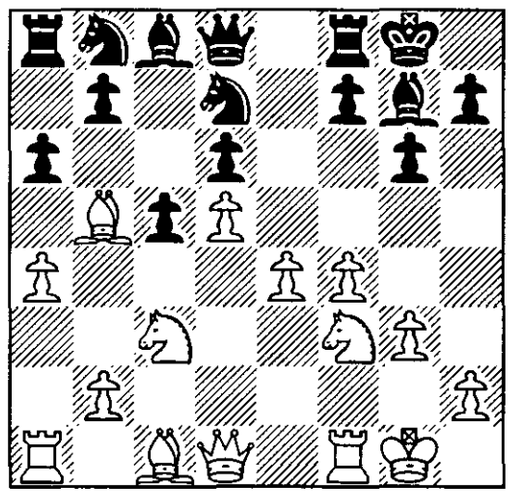
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4

The actual move order in the game was 9 ♗e2 a6 10 a4 ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕d8 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 0-0.

9...♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕d8!?

It is debatable whether it is worth Black's spending two moves to force a weakness in the white kingside.

11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 a6



13 ♗e2

Also promising for White is 13 ♗c4 ♘b6 14 ♗e2 ♗g4 15 ♘g5! ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2, as in H.Olafsson-Psakhis, Moscow 1989. However, 13 ♗d3?! is less effective, since it blocks off the protection of the d-pawn, allowing Black to play 13...♘f6 without fear of e4-e5.

13...♖e8 14 ♔g2!?

A nice piece of prophylaxis, covering the weak light squares on the kingside.

14...♘f8

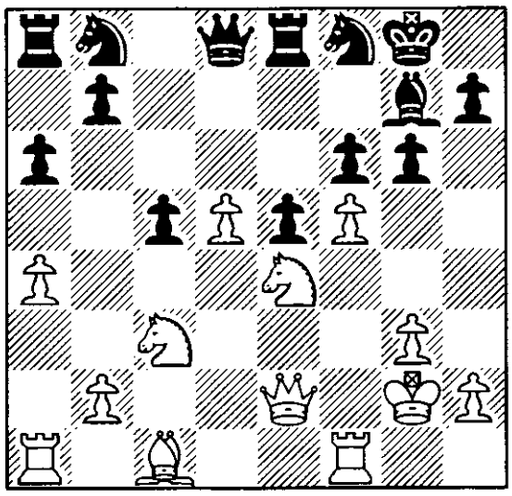
If this is the best that Black can do then he probably already has a bad position.

The critical continuation is 14...♘f6 15 e5 dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘g4 17 e6 fxe6 18 ♘g5, as in Muir-Peicheva Hansen, Copenhagen 1990. This also looks quite promising for White, but at least Black has a fighting chance. In the game he quickly gets squashed.

15 e5 ♗g4 16 ♘g5! ♗xe2 17 ♕xe2 f6

17...dxe5 18 f5 is very similar to the game.

18 ♘ge4 dxe5 19 f5!



As so often in the Benoni, it is a sure sign that thinks have gone wrong for Black when his opponent has managed to install a knight on e4 in this kind of position.

19...gxf5 20 ♖xf5 ♘g6 21 ♗e3 b6 22 ♖af1

Black is positionally busted.

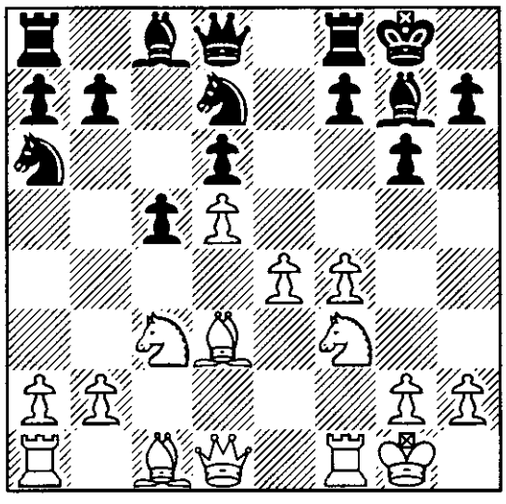
22...♘d7 23 d6 ♘gf8 24 ♘d5 ♘e6 25 ♕g4 ♔h8 26 ♖h5 ♖a7 27 ♕h4 ♘ef8 28 ♗h6 ♗xh6 29 ♖xh6 ♖e6 30 ♖f5 ♕e8 31 ♘c7 ♖xc7 32 dxc7 1-0

Game 35
Thorbergsson-Tringov
Reykjavik 1974

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 9 ♗d3

White tries to make do without a2-a4. Note that after 9 ♘f3 a6 10 ♗d3 b5 11 0-0 0-0 Black has achieved his desired queenside expansion without having to make any real concessions, while after 9 ♗e2 Black can play 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7 12 ♔h1 a6 with a slightly improved version of Game 31 as the white bishop is less active on e2 than on d3.

9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0



11...♖b8!

Black takes advantage of White's move order. The routine 11...♘c7 12 a4 transposes to Games 31 and 32.

12 ♘d2

Several other moves are possible here:

a) After 12 a4?! ♘b4 13 ♗b1 a6 the white bishop is no longer able to assist with preventing ...b7-b5.

b) 12 ♘b5 ♕b6 13 ♗c4 ♘c7 14 a4 ♘xb5 15 axb5 a6 16 ♗d2 ♕c7 was fine for Black in Jimenez-Browne, Winnipeg 1974.

c) 12 ♔h1 (preventing any of the funny business along the a7-g1 diagonal that we see in the game) 12...♘c7 13 a4 a6 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♘xb6 16 f5 gxf5 17 exf5 ♘bxd5 18 ♗g5 and a draw was agreed in Dorfman-Psakhis, USSR 1980, although it is not clear to me exactly what White has for the pawn after 18...♘f6.

12...b5!

A sneaky pawn sacrifice which takes advantage of the position of the white king on g1.

13 ♘xb5 c4 14 ♘xc4

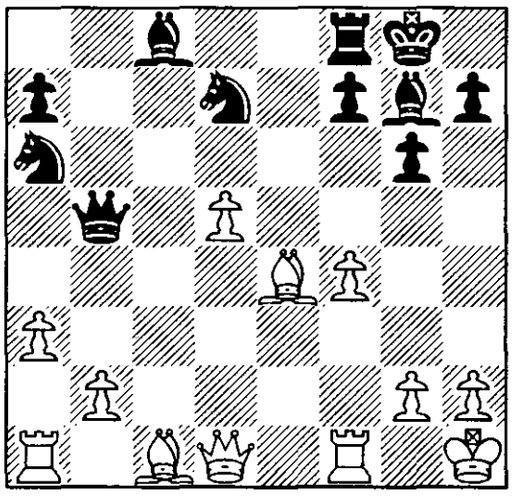
After 14 ♗xc4 ♖xb5 15 ♗xb5 ♕b6+ 16

♔h1 ♕xb5 Black also has full compensation for the slight loss in material, since White is unable to unravel his queenside for the time being.

14...♖xb5 15 ♘xd6 ♖b4

15...♖xd5 is also playable. After 16 ♘xc8 (not 16 exd5?! ♕b6+ and ...♕xd6 with a better version of the main game for Black) 16...♖d4 17 ♗e3 (the immediate queen sacrifice 17 ♗xa6 ♖xd1 18 ♖xd1 is very good for Black after 18...♕a5 19 ♘e7+ ♔h8 20 ♖xd7 ♕a4!) 17...♘dc5 18 ♗xa6 ♖xd1 19 ♖axd1 ♕a5 20 ♘e7+ ♔h8 21 ♗c4 ♘xe4 22 ♗b3 ♘f6 23 ♘c6 a draw was agreed in Horvath-Sikora, Hungary 1979,

16 a3 ♖d4 17 ♘b5 ♖xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♕b6+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xb5



A very unclear position has arisen in which White's rook and two pawns are offset by Black's two minor pieces and better activity.

20 ♗d3 ♕b6

I prefer 20...♕c5 here, planning to round up the d-pawn with ...♘c7.

21 ♕e2

Or 21 ♕f3 ♖e8 and Black has all his pieces in the game.

21...♘ac5 22 ♗c4 ♕d6 23 ♗e3 ♘b6 24 ♖ac1 ♘cd7 25 ♗b3 ♗b7 26 ♖fd1 ♖e8 27 ♖e1 ♘f6

It is not at all obvious why Black did not simply play 27...♘xd5.

28 ♕b5 h5 29 h3 h4 30 ♖cd1 ♖c8 31 ♕a5 ♖a8

Black has slightly lost the plot over the last few moves, but his opponent has nothing to attack and Black is able to regroup his forces.

32 ♕b5 ♘h5 33 ♕c5 ♕d8 34 ♕b4 ♘g3+ 35 ♔h2 ♘f5 36 ♗f2 ♗f8 37 ♕d2 ♗d6 38 ♔h1 ♕b8 39 ♗xb6?

A very poorly motivated exchange, giving his opponent total control of the dark squares. After 39 ♖e4 the game would have been still in the balance, but now it is easy for Black.

39...axb6 40 ♖f1 ♕c7 41 ♖c1 ♕e7 42 ♖f3 ♘g3+ 43 ♔h2 ♘h5 44 ♔g1 ♕f6 45 ♖c4 ♖e8 46 ♗a4 ♖e7 47 b4 ♘g3 48 ♗d1 b5 49 ♖d4 ♖e1+ 50 ♕xe1 ♕xd4+ 51 ♔h2 ♗xf4 52 ♗b3 ♔g7 53 ♕d1 ♕e5 54 ♗a2 ♗e3 55 ♖xe3 ♕xe3 56 ♗b3 ♘e2 57 ♕a1+ ♔h7 58 ♕d1 ♘d4 59 ♕f1 ♗xd5 60 ♗xd5 ♕e5+ 0-1

Game 36
I.Sokolov-Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 1996

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+ ♘bd7!?

If Black can get away with it then this is the move that he would dearly like to make. However, this natural move was considered dubious by theory until it underwent a mini-revival in the hands of Shabalov, De Firmian and Topalov in the early/mid 1990s. Unfortunately the text game seems to have consigned it to the backwaters once again, although it is not entirely clear that is unsound in my opinion. Certainly, it still warrants attention as a surprise weapon, if nothing else, and the sharp positions that arise might be suitable in a 'win at all costs' situation.

The move 8...♗d7 also implies a piece

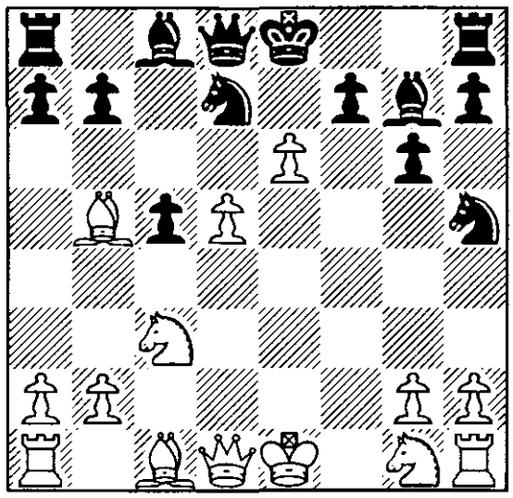
sacrifice after 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘h5 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 (12...♕xd7 13 0-0 leaves White with a massive centre) 13 g4 ♘xe5 14 gxh5 ♘xf3+ 15 ♕xf3, when it is hard to believe that Black has enough compensation.

9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘h5

10...♕e7? 11 ♕e2 is hopeless for Black.

11 e6

After 11 ♘f3 Black can simply castle and then play against the fragile white pawn centre, e.g. 11...0-0 12 ♗g5 f6 or 12...♕a5 with a very unclear position.



At first sight it looks as if Black is simply dropping a piece, but in fact this is just the start of a long, fairly forcing variation.

11...♕h4+!

The older 11...fxe6 12 dxe6 0-0 13 ♘f3 is just bad for Black, e.g. 13...♗d4 14 ♗g5! ♘df6 15 ♕e2 ♕e7 16 0-0-0 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♘g7 18 ♖he1 and Black is in deep trouble (Norwood).

12 g3

12 ♔d2!? is still relatively unexplored, e.g. 12...fxe6 13 dxe6 0-0 14 exd7 ♖f2+ (14...♗xd7 15 ♗xd7 ♖ad8 16 ♔c2! ♖f2+ 17 ♔b1 allowed the white king to slip away in Aleksandrov-Wojtkiewicz, Wisla 1992) 15 ♘ge2 ♗xd7 16 ♗xd7 ♖d8 17 ♔c2 (Vaisser recommends 17 ♕a4!, but the endgame after 17...♕xa4 18 ♘xa4 ♖xd7+ 19 ♔e1 ♖xg2 is hardly clear cut) 17...♗xc3 18 ♕d5+ ♔h8 and now instead of 19 bxc3 ♖xe2+ 20 ♔b3 b5 21 g4 ♕e7 22 ♗xb5 ♖xd5 23 ♗xe2 ♕xe2 24 gxh5 ♖d6 0-1 Oei-Wojtkiewicz, Antwerp open 1993, White could have tried 19 ♕e6!? with a very unclear position.

12...♘xg3 13 hxg3

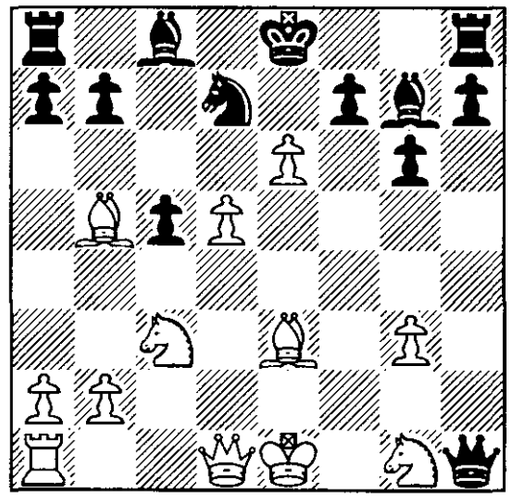
Necessary, as Black is fine after 13 ♘f3 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕e4+ and ....♘xh1.

13...♕xh1

Not 13...♕xg3+? 14 ♔d2.

14 ♗e3

There is not much point in playing 14 exd7+ yet, as the knight is not exactly going anywhere, e.g. 14...♗xd7 15 ♗xd7+ (not 15 ♕e2+ ♔f8!) 15...♔xd7 16 ♕g4+ f5 17 ♕a4+ ♔c8 18 ♗e3 ♗xc3+ 19 bxc3 ♕xd5 20 ♖d1 ♕c6 and Black was okay in Thorsteins-Ashley, New York open 1989.



14...♗xc3+!

In combination with his next move, this is what caused a revival in the whole variation for Black. Previously 14...0-0? 15 exd7 ♗xd7 16 ♗xd7 ♖ae8 17 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 18 ♕e2! ♗d4 (or 18...♗h6 19 ♔f1 ♖xe3 20 ♕g2 and White can consolidate) 19 0-0-0 ♖xe3 had been played, but David Norwood has pointed out that White has a tremendous position after 20 ♕c2.

15 bxc3 a6!

After 15...♕e4 16 ♕f3 ♕xf3 17 ♘xf3 fxe6 18 dxe6 0-0 19 ♗h6! ♖xf3 20 ♖d1! ♖xc3 21 exd7 ♗xd7 22 ♖xd7 a6 23 ♗f1!

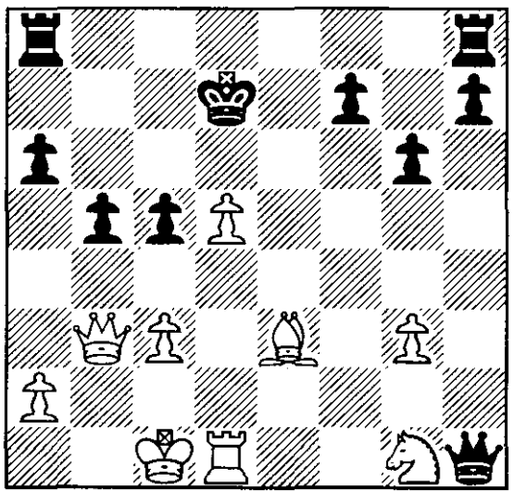
(Kalinin) Black is slaughtered by the two bishops.

16 exd7+ ♗xd7 17 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 18 ♕b3

This new move has cast a shadow over the whole variation for Black. The endgame after 18 ♕f3 ♕xf3 19 ♘xf3 ♖he8 or 18 ♕a4+ b5 19 ♕g4+ f5 20 ♕f3 ♕xf3 21 ♘xf3 ♖he8 is very unclear and Black has enjoyed good practical results in practice. As long as he remains active with his rooks he should be okay.

18...b5 19 0-0-0

After 19 ♗xc5 Black can consider 19...♖hc8 and if the bishop moves to d4, b6 or f2 then ...♕g2.



19...♖he8?!

If Black wishes to play this variation then it is probably here that he needs to find an improvement. The rook does not actually achieve much on the e-file, so it seems more logical to centralise the queen with 19...♕e4. Now after 20 ♗xc5 Black can try 20...♖hc8!, leaving the other rook on a8 to keep guard on the a-pawn. White then has two main choices:

a) 21 ♗d4 ♖c4 (confirmation that he moved the right rook as the king's rook would be exposed to attack on h8) 22 ♔b2 ♕g2+ 23 ♔a1 ♖e8! (now the e-file is much more useful) 24 ♕b2 ♕xg3 25 ♘e2 ♕f3 26 ♖d2 ♖xe2 27 ♖xe2 ♕f1+ 28 ♕b1 ♕xe2 29 ♕h1 h5 30 d6 ♖c6 0-1 Asgeirsson-B.Bjornsson, Reykjavik 1998.

b) 21 ♕a3 and now:

b1) 21...♕c4 22 ♗d4 (22 ♗b4 ♕c7 leaves the bishop looking offside) 22...b4 23 ♕a4+ ♕b5 24 ♕xb5+ axb5 25 ♔b2 bxc3+ 26 ♗xc3 and White is clearly on top in the endgame.

b2) 21...♕g4 (dominating the white knight) 22 ♗d6 ♕e4 with an active position. The move ....♖c4 is on the cards.

It is difficult to state categorically that Black has full equality after 19...♕e4, but he certainly has a very active position and White has serious problems bringing his knight into play. In any case, this seems much more promising for Black than the game move.

20 ♗xc5 ♖ac8?!

Here 20...♕g2 was a better try, e.g. 21 d6 ♖e6 and now if 22 ♗b4 (Vaisser) then 22...♖ae8 with good counterplay.

21 ♗d4 ♕g2

Neither 21...♖e4 22 ♔b1 nor 21...♖c4 22 ♘e2 ♕f3 23 ♘f4 ♖e4 (23...♕xg3 24 ♘d3) 24 ♘d3 is at all attractive for Black (I.Sokolov).

22 ♕a3 ♕xg3

22...♖a8 allows White to infiltrate with his queen by 23 ♕c5 ♖ec8 24 ♕b6.

23 ♕xa6 ♖xc3+ 24 ♔b2

24 ♔b1! was more accurate.

24...♖cc8 25 ♕xb5+ ♔d6

Or 25...♔e7 26 d6+! ♕xd6 27 ♖e1+ ♔f8 28 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 29 ♗c5 and the black queen drops (I.Sokolov).

26 ♔a1!

Once White has built a safe nest for the king Black's task is hopeless.

26...♕a3 27 ♗b2 ♕c5 28 ♕a6+ ♔d7 29 ♕a4+ 1-0

Summary

The 'Flick-Knife Attack' is undoubtedly the biggest threat to the Modern Benoni. Black has to play very actively to avoid being squashed by an early e4-e5. In my view Black should either go for ...b7-b5 with the 8...♘fd7 9 a4 (9 ♗d3 seems relatively harmless, as we saw in Game 35) 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7 move order, as discussed in Games 31 and 32.

The sharp 8...♘bd7 is currently under a theoretical cloud, but it may still be playable, as we observed in Game 36.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+

8...♘fd7

8...♘bd7 – *Game 36*

9 a4

9 ♗d3 – *Game 35*

9...0-0

9...♕h4+ 10 g3 *(D)*

10...♕e7 – *Game 33*

10...♕d8 – *Game 34*

10 ♘f3 *(D)* **♘a6**

10...a6 – *Game 29*

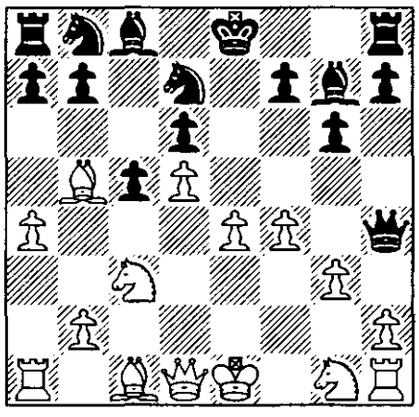
11 0-0 ♘c7

11...♘b4 – *Game 30*

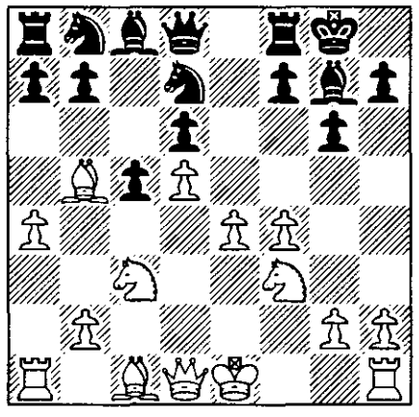
12 ♗d3 a6 *(D)* **13 ♖e1**

13 ♕e1 – *Game 32*

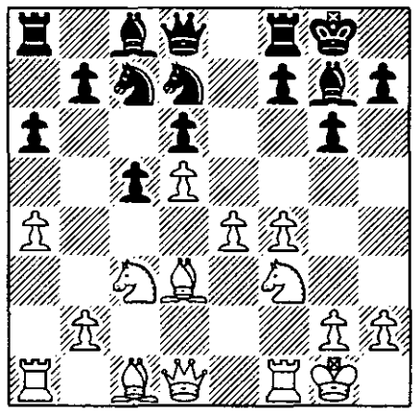
13...♖e8 – *Game 31*



10 g3

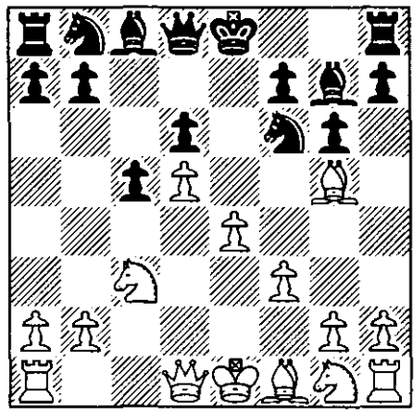


10 ♘f3



12...a6

CHAPTER SIX



Sämisch Variation (6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5

In some ways 7 f3 is very attractive for White, as it bolsters the e4-pawn and thereby removes (at least for the time being) one of the main points of focus for Black's counterplay. However, f2-f3 does take away the most natural square from the king's knight and, as we shall see, White often has to go into contortions to find a suitable location for this problem piece. Indeed, he sometimes ends up moving it three or four times in the first 15 moves.

Black has two main ways to approach this variation. Broadly speaking, he can seek to play on the kingside with the idea of an eventual ...f7-f5 break (as in Games 37 and 38) or try his luck on the queenside with ...b7-b5 or ...c5-c4 (Games 39-41).

Game 37
Alterman-Gelfand
Riga 1987

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5

8 ♗e3 leads to very similar play to the main lines with 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♕d2 h6 10 ♗e3 a6 11 a4 except that Black does not have to worry about his h-pawn and may be able to save a move by avoiding having had to play ...h7-h6. Although Black cannot play the standard ...♘h7 with the pawn still on h6, the queenside plans along the lines of Game 39 are far more effective for him.

Instead 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 ♘g3 is currently very fashionable, when Black has:

b) 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♗e2 h5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 0-0 ♘h7 15 ♗h6 ♗h8 left Black struggling for counterplay in Dreev-Kotronias, Las Vegas 1999.

b) The surprising 9...♘h5!? 10 ♘xh5 gxh5 11 ♗d3 f5 12 0-0 ♘a6 13 a3 ♗d7 worked out well for Black in Chernin-Glek, German Bundesliga 1998/99, but after 11 ♗f4! f5 12 ♕d2 ♕f6 13 ♗g5 ♕g6 14 ♗d3 White had a good game in Ward-Buckley, British Championship, Millfield 2000.

c) 9....♘bd7 10 ♗e2 h5 11 ♗g5! ♕b6!? 12 ♕d2 ♘h7 with an unclear position in Thaler-Pavlovic, Biel 2000.

8...0-0

8...h6!? avoids any funny business with ♗xh6 (see below), and will transpose to the main game after 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♕d2 a6 11 a4.

9 ♕d2

It is hard to believe that White will be able to do without this natural move for long, e.g. 9 ♘ge2 h6 10 ♗e3 a6 11 a4 ♘bd7! (Black does not have to worry about ♘h3 so he can decide later whether ...♖e8 or ...h7-h5 will be necessary or not) 12 ♘g3 (12 ♘f4 and 12 ♘c1 are both well met by ...♘e5) 12...h5 13 ♗e2 h4 14 ♘f1 ♘h7 and Black was ready for ...f7-f5 in Thorsteins-Benjamin, Reykjavik 1990.

9...h6

9...a6 10 a4 h6 11 ♗e3 comes to the same thing, although the line with 11 ♗xh6!? (see the next note) may be slightly more attractive for White with ...a7-a6 and a2-a4 thrown in, e.g. 11...♘xe4 12 fxe4 ♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕xh6 14 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 15 ♘xd6 ♘d7 16 a5!, as in Ionescu-Baron, Manresa open 1995. Black can also try to make do without playing ...h7-h6, as we shall see in Games 39-41.

10 ♗e3

Of course Black is ready for 10 ♗xh6, i.e. 10...♘xe4 11 fxe4 ♕h4+ 12 g3 ♕xh6 13 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 14 ♘xd6 ♘d7, but after 15 f4 (15 ♗h3 ♘b6 offers good compensation) 15...♘f6 16 0-0-0 ♖d8 17 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 18 ♗g2 (or 18 ♗h3 ♖b8) 18...♘g4 19 ♗h3 ♘f2 20 ♗xc8 ♘xd1 21 ♔xd1 ♖xc8 22 ♘e2 ♖d8 23 ♘c3 ♗g7 24 ♔c2 ♗xc3 25 bxc3 ♖xd5 26 a4! White had some winning chances in the endgame in Piket-Van Wely, Amsterdam 1996. This explains why 8...h6!? may be the most accurate move order.

10...a6

Although this move and White's reply often occur as a matter of routine, Black can also consider the immediate 10...h5!?, e.g. 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 ♘c1 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘h7 14 0-0 and now Black has a choice between:

a) 14...f5?! 15 f4! and now:

a1) 15...♘g4?! 16 ♗xg4 hxg4 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♗xc5 was very good for White in Ionov-Kuzmin, Minsk 1986.

a2) 15...♘f7 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♗xc5 ♖e8 18 ♘d3 e4 19 ♘e1 favoured White in Yusupov-Dolmatov, Wijk aan Zee (8th match game) 1991, since in comparison to the note to Black's 13th move below the d6-square is unavailable to the black queen after 19...b6 20 ♗e3.

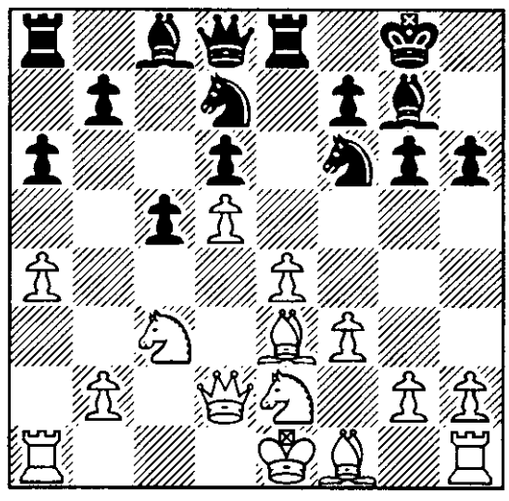
a3) 15...♘d7 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♗xh5 b5 18 ♘xb5 ♘hf6, as in Sadler-Crouch, Hastings 1992/93, is reckoned by *ECO* to provide Black with sufficient compensation, though this looks very dodgy to me.

b) 14...♖e8! 15 ♖b1 f5 16 b4 c4! with a very complicated game in prospect in Cebalo-Tal, Taxco Interzonal 1985.

11 a4 h5

It is important for Black to delay playing ...♘bd7 until the white knight has gone to e2. For example, 11...♘bd7?! allows 12 ♘h3 ♘e5 13 ♘f2, when a position similar to that in Game 38 will arise except that White has saved two whole tempi with his knights! Black's other alternatives here are considered in the next main game.

12 ♘ge2 ♘bd7



13 ♘c1

After 13 ♘f4 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♗d7 Black will soon be able to arrange some queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5.

13...♖e8

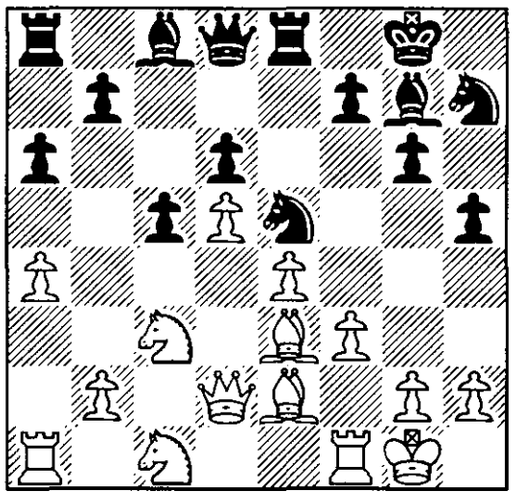
With this precise move order Black can

also consider dispensing with ...♖e8, e.g. 13...♘e5!? 14 ♗e2 (of course not 14 ♘d3? ♘c4) 14...♘h7 15 0-0 f5 16 h3 ♘f6 17 f4 ♘f7 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 ♗f3 ♘h6 20 ♔h1 ♕d7 and Black quickly took control of the game in Ballon-Howell, Isle of Man open 1994. However, it is not clear that White needs to preface f3-f4 with 16 h3, as after 16 f4 ♘g4 White can play 17 ♗xg4 followed by e4-e5. Black should therefore calmly meet 16 f4 by 16...♘f7 with a roughly level game, as 17 e5 can be met by 17...dxe5 18 ♗xc5 ♖e8 19 ♘d3 e4 20 ♘e1 b6 21 ♗e3 ♕d6 followed by ...♗b7, ...♖ad8 and ...♘f6.

14 ♗e2

The alternative 14 ♘d3 ♘e5 15 ♘f2 ♘h7 16 ♗e2 f5 17 0-0 is considered in the next main game (by transposition).

14...♘e5 15 0-0 ♘h7



As so often with this variation, the game itself arose from a King's Indian move order: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 cxd5 h5 10 ♘ge2 a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 ♘c1 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘h7 14 0-0 ♖e8, reaching the diagram position with one move fewer played by each side.

16 ♖a3

In this critical position numerous moves have been tried for White, but Black seems to be okay in every instance. For example:

a) 16 a5 f5 17 ♖a3 transposes to the note to move 17 in the main game.

b) 16 ♘1a2 (this is rather a clumsy square for the knight) 16...f5 17 ♖fe1 ♗d7 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 h3 ♘f6 20 f4 ♘f7 21 ♗f2 ♕d7 and Black was fine in Brunner-Xie Jun, Shanghai 1995.

c) 16 ♔h1 f5 17 ♘1a2 ♗d7 (17...♘f6 looks more precise) 18 h3 ♘f6 19 exf5 ♗xf5 and again Black had a reasonable game in Rajkovic-Strikovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1987.

d) 16 ♗f2 (a clever idea, intending to play ♘d3 without fear of ...♘c4, but one which is slightly flawed) 16...f5 17 ♘d3 and now in Xu Jun-Chen De, Chinese Championship 1987, Black could have played 17...fxe4 18 fxe4 ♘g5!? with equality.

e) 16 ♖b1 (this thematic move, intending b2-b4, may be White's best) 16...f5 17 b4 b6 18 ♔h1 (18 ♘1a2 ♘f6 is fine for Black) 18...♘f6 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♖b2, as in Dragomaretsky-Shekachev, Moscow Championship 1989, and now I like the idea of 20...♘fd7 to bolster the queenside before playing ...c5xb4 and ...♖c8.

16...f5 17 ♘1a2

After 17 a5 ♘f6 18 exf5 (18 ♘1a2 would have transposed back to the main game) 18...♗xf5 19 h3 ♖c8!? (the start of a highly creative manoeuvre) 20 ♘a4 (perhaps 20 g4!?) 20...♖c7 21 ♘b6 ♖ce7 Black had excellent control of the e-file in Dao Thien Hai-Wang Pin, Quezon City 2000. A similar idea for White is the immediate 17 h3, with the idea of 17...♘f6?! 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 g4!, but Black can flick in 17...fxe4 18 fxe4 ♕h4 with an equal game.

17...♘f6

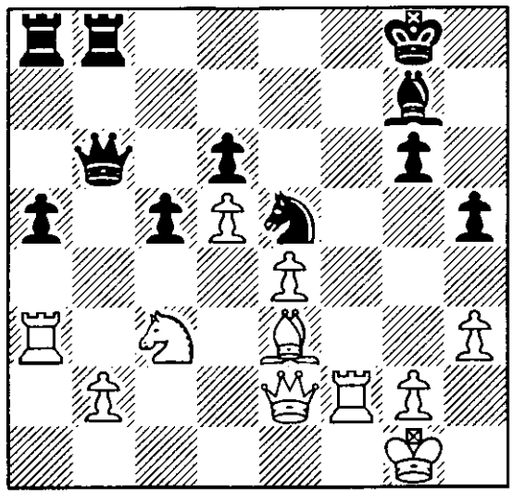
The correct strategy, bringing more pressure to bear on the white centre.

18 a5 fxe4 19 ♘xe4

Or 19 fxe4 ♗g4 and Black also has a

massive outpost on e5 for his knight.

19...♘xe4 20 fxe4 ♗g4 21 h3 ♗xe2 22 ♕xe2 b5 23 axb6 ♕xb6 24 ♘c3 ♖eb8 25 ♖f2 a5



Black has achieved a commanding Benko Gambit-type position, but without having had to sacrifice a pawn. Note how the knight on e5 dominates the whole board. White rushes to exchange this piece, but the black bishop then takes up a powerful residence on this square.

26 ♗f4 ♕a6! 27 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 28 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 29 ♖e2 ♖ab6 30 ♘d1 ♖b5!

The b-pawn is not going away.

31 ♔f1 ♔g7 32 ♖a2 ♔h6! 33 ♖a3 ♔g5

White is almost in zugzwang.

34 g3 ♖b3 35 ♔g2 ♖xa3 36 bxa3 ♖b3 37 ♖e3 c4 38 ♔f2 ♗d4 0-1

Game 38
Andrianov-Kotronias
Komotini 1993

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♕d2 h6 10 ♗e3 a6 11 a4 ♖e8

Black can also try to get by without this move or 11...h5 (for which, see the previous main game), e.g. 11...♘h7!? (11...♔h7 is far too passive) 12 ♘ge2 ♘d7 and now:

a) 13 ♘g3 h5 14 ♗e2 h4 15 ♘f1 f5 is obviously fine for Black as White must move his king's knight yet again before he can castle.

b) 13 ♘c1 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 f5 15 0-0 g5 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 a5 ♕e7 18 ♘a4 led to a quick draw in H.Olafsson-Mortensen, Esbjerg 1985. The rook is sometimes better on f8 than on e8 when Black plays ...f7-f5 so Black has gained time here.

c) 13 ♘d1 ♘e5 14 ♘ec3 f5 and again Black was fine in Despotovic-Tringov, Belgrade 1988.

d) 13 ♘f4 (to prevent...f7-f5 due to ♘e6) 13...♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♗d7 15 0-0 and now instead of 15...♖b8, as in Chernin-Zsu.Polgar, Stary Smokovec 1984, Black can consider 15...♘g5!? to try and force through ...f7-f5.

12 ♘ge2

The bizarre-looking 12 ♗e2!? h5 13 ♗d1 has been seen a few times recently. However, after 13...♘bd7 14 ♘ge2 ♘e5 15 b3 b6! 16 0-0 ♖b8 17 ♗c2 b5 Black had achieved his queenside counterplay in Yevseev-Sakaev, Russia 1999.

12...♘bd7

12...h5 will probably transpose to the previous main game after 13 ♘c1 ♘bd7, since 13 ♘f4 ♘bd7 14 ♗e2 ♘e5 15 0-0 ♖b8 was harmless in Milanovic-Matulovic, Pozarevac 1995.

13 ♘d1

White has three important alternatives here:

a) 13 ♗xh6 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♕h4+ 15 g3 ♕xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 17 ♘xd6 ♖e3! with compensation for the pawn in Dreev-Kasparov, Moscow rapidplay 1996.

b) 13 ♘c1 and now:

b1) 13...♘h7 14 ♗e2 (or 14 ♘d3 ♘e5 15 ♘f2 g5 with equality in Gulko-Loginov, Volgodonsk 1983) 14...g5!? 15 ♖a3 ♕e7 16 ♗f2 f5 and Black managed to take advantage of the tempo saved by not playing ...h6-h5 in Vasyukov-Kuzmin, Moscow 1986.

b2) 13...♘h5!? 14 g4?! (14 ♗e2 ♕h4+ 15

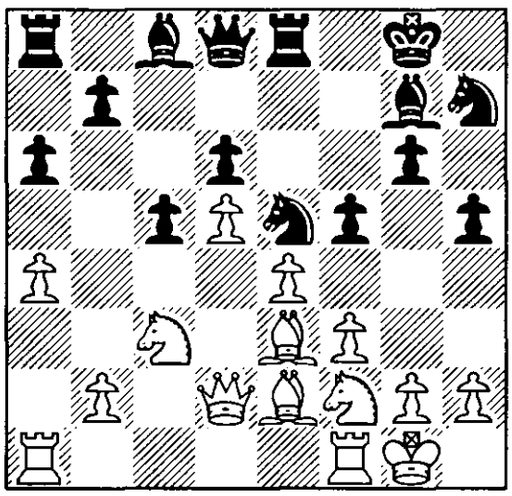
♗f2 ♕g5 was safer and may slightly favour White after 16 ♕xg5 hxg5 17 ♗e3) 14...♘e5 15 ♗e2 ♕h4+ allowed Black a strong attack in Damljanovic-Pavlovic, Panormo Zonal 1998.

c) The provocative 13 ♘g3!? attempts to take advantage of Black's omission of ...h6-h5, e.g. 13...h5 14 ♗e2 h4 15 ♘f1 ♘h7 (to prevent ♗g5) 16 ♗f2 ♘e5 17 ♘e3 ♕g5 with a reasonable game for Black in Novikov-Loginov, Volgodansk 1983.

13...♘e5 14 ♘ec3 ♘h7!?

Both 14...♗d7 and 14...♘h5 are also quite playable.

15 ♗e2 f5 16 0-0 h5 17 ♘f2



Via a weird and wonderful sequence we have arrived at a position that usually arises from the move order given in the previous main game. In our game the move order was actually 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗g5 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 cxd5 h6 10 ♗e3 ♖e8 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 ♘d1 ♘h7 13 ♘f2 h5 14 ♘c3 a6 15 a4 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 f5 17 0-0. Note that in this sequence 17 exf5 gxf5 only helps Black, e.g. 18 f4?! ♘g4 19 ♘xg4 hxg4 20 ♗f2 b6 and ...♖a7-e7, or 18 0-0 ♕h4 19 ♖fe1 ♗d7 20 ♗f4 ♖e7 21 ♘h3 ♖ae8 with powerful play on the e-file in Rufener-Gallagher, Bern 1997.

17...♗d7

Or 17...h4!? 18 ♔h1 (this seems a little aimless; perhaps 18 ♖fe1!?) 18...♗d7 19 exf5 gxf5 20 ♘h3 and here a draw was agreed in Dorfman-Kir.Georgiev, Elenite 1992, though in the same event and with the same opponent one year later Vyzmanavin decided to play on with 20 ♘h3 ♘g6 21 ♖fe1 ♕f6 22 f4 ♖e7 with unclear complications. However, that was not the end of the story, as when Vyzmanavin and Kir.Georgiev met again in the Groningen PCA tournament later in 1993 Black opted for 18...♖b8 instead of 18...♗d7. After 19 ♖g1 ♔h8 20 g3 b5!? 21 axb5 axb5 22 gxh4 ♕xh4 23 ♖g3 b4 24 ♘cd1 Kapengut suggests 24...fxe4 25 fxe4 c4 with good counterplay.

18 ♖fb1

18 ♖fe1 looks more circumspect.

18...♕f6 19 ♖a3 g5 20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♘ce4 ♕g6 22 ♖f1 g4 23 ♔h1 h4 24 ♗f4 ♔h8

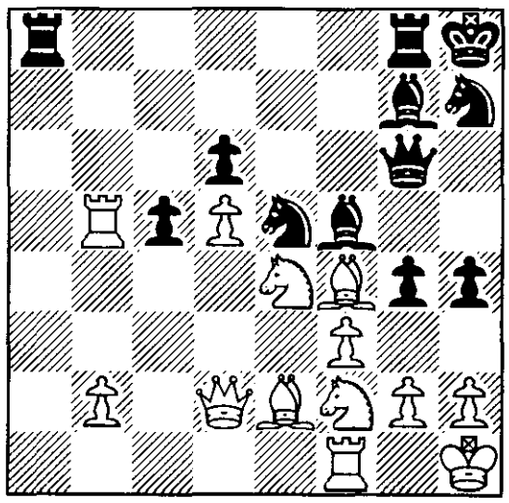
Possibly too ambitious. The simple 24...♗xe4 25 fxe4 (or 25 ♘xe4 ♖f8) 25...♘f6 should be fine for Black.

25 ♖b3

Black is now virtually forced to give up the b-pawn, though it is not clear whether he has enough for it.

25...b5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♖xb5 ♖g8

27...h3 28 ♘g3 hxg2+ 29 ♔xg2 gxf3+ 30 ♗xf3 ♘xf3 31 ♔xf3 seems to hold things together, despite the bizarre king placement.



28 h3?!

I do not understand why White would want to weaken himself on the kingside. After 28 ♖g1 or 28 ♕e3 he may be able to consolidate.

28...gxh3 29 gxh3 ♗xe4 30 fxe4 ♗h6 31 ♘g4?

A horrible mistake. 31 ♗g4 ♗xf4 32 ♕xf4 ♘f6 favours Black, but White can still fight on.

31...♕xe4+ 32 ♔h2 ♘xg4+ 33 ♗xg4 ♖af8 34 ♕c3+ ♗g7 35 ♕f3 ♖xf4 0-1

Game 39
Lputian-Palatnik
Lvov 1986

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗g5 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 a4 ♕a5

This rather old-fashioned variation aims to force through ...b7-b5 or perhaps later ...c5-c4. A similar idea is 10...♖e8 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 ♘g3 ♕c7, as in Game 40.

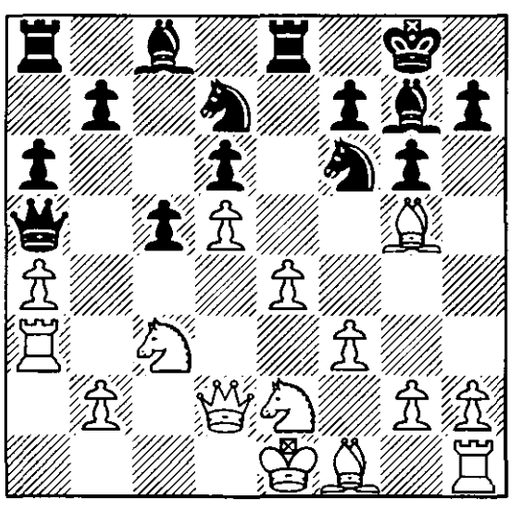
11 ♖a3

Naturally White must move the rook to prevent ...b7-b5.

11...♖e8

As usual Black waits until his opponent has played ♘ge2 before blocking the line of the bishop to h3 with ...♘bd7.

12 ♘ge2 ♘bd7



13 ♘g3

It is debatable whether the knight belongs here or on c1. After 13 ♘c1 play might continue:

a) 13...♖b8 14 ♗e2 ♕c7 15 0-0 c4 16 ♔h1 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 b4 and White had a typical bind in Serafimov-Plotnikov, Orel 1996.

b) 13...♘e5 14 ♗e2 and now:

b1) 14...♕b4?! 15 ♕c2! (side-stepping ...♕d4) 15...♘xd5?? (15...c4 is only slightly better for White) 16 ♖b3 (Black must have missed this intermezzo) 16...♕a5 17 exd5 c4 18 ♖a3 ♗f5 19 ♕d2 ♘d3+ 20 ♔f1 ♕b6 21 ♗xd3 ♗xd3+ 22 ♘xd3 cxd3 23 a5 ♗xc3 24 axb6 1-0 Chandler-Barczay, Keszthely 1981.

b2) 14...c4 15 0-0 ♗d7 16 ♗e3 ♖ac8 17 ♗d4 h5 18 ♔h1 ♘h7 19 ♕e3 ♕d8 20 a5 with a slight pull for White in Tal-Quinteros, St del Esterol 1987.

c) 13...h5 14 ♗e2 ♘h7 15 ♗e3 ♘e5 16 0-0 f5, as in Bronstein-Larsen, Belgrade 1964, is exactly the same position as after 16 moves of Game 37 except that here Black's queen stands on a5 rather than d8 (Black played ...♕a5 and ...h7-h5 rather than ...h7-h6 and ....h6-h5). However, this is probably not in his favour as the queen is really needed on the kingside, where the action is.

13...♖b8

Black has a couple of important alternatives:

a) 13...♘e5 14 ♗e2 will transpose to note 'b' after 14...♕b4 and to the note to Black's 14th move after 14...♖b8.

b) If Black is intending to place his queen on b4, then he should probably do so straightaway, e.g. 13...♕b4!? 14 ♗e2 ♘e5 15 0-0 ♗d7 and now 16 ♖c1 would have given White a slight plus in Kozlov-Mariasin, USSR 1989.

c) 13...h5!? 14 ♗e2 ♘h7 15 ♗f4 (15 ♗h6 ♗d4 or 15 ♗e3 h4 16 ♘f1 ♘e5 should be fine for Black) 15...h4 16 ♘f1 ♘e5 17 h3 and again White was slightly better in Timoshchenko-Loginov, USSR

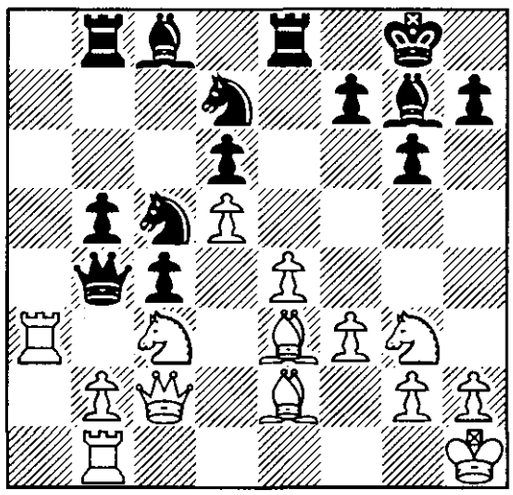
1984.

14 ♗e2 ♕b4?!

The queen now turns out to be very poorly placed on this square, though after 14...♕c7 15 0-0 c4 16 ♗e3 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 b4! White also had the better game in Topalov-Reyes, Palma 1992.

Nor can 14...♘e5 really be recommended as the knight may prove to be a target here, e.g. 15 0-0 h5 16 f4! ♘ed7 17 e5 dxe5 18 fxe5 ♘h7 19 e6 fxe6 20 dxe5 ♘e5 21 e7 ♘xg5 22 ♕xg5 and White had a very promising position in Temirbaev-Simonenko, Ashkhabad 1996.

15 0-0 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♔h1! c4 18 ♗e3 ♘c5 19 ♕c2 ♘fd7 20 ♖b1



This is the kind of thing which puts many players off the ...♕a5 variation. White is threatening ♘a2, unceremoniously trapping the black queen. Black is forced to relinquish material in order to escape from the snare.

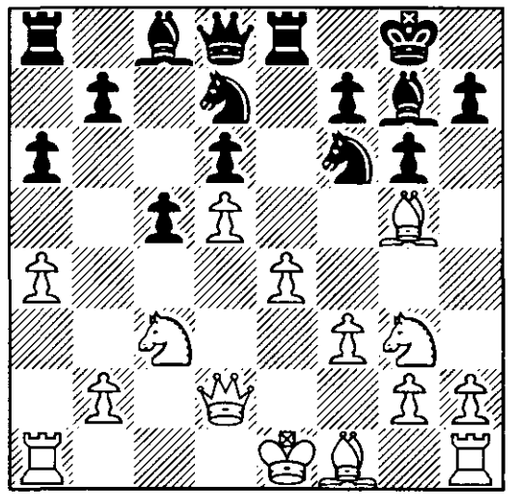
20...♘a4 21 ♘xa4 bxa4 22 ♗d2 c3 23 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♘c5 25 ♗c4 ♗d7 26 h4 ♖b6 27 h5 ♖eb8 28 h6 f6 29 ♔h2 ♔f7 30 f4 a3 31 e5 ♗a4 32 b3 a2 33 ♖f1 ♕a3 34 bxa4 a1♕ 35 ♖xa1 ♕xa1 36 ♗b5 fxe5 37 fxe5 ♔g8 38 exd6 ♘b7 39 d7

39 ♖c8+ ♘d8 40 ♕e4! would have been an even quicker route to victory.

39...♘d8 40 ♕e4 ♖f6 41 ♕e8+ ♖f8 42 ♕e5 1-0

Game 40
Plachetka-Vokac
Czech Championship, Sumperk 1984

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♕d2 a6 10 a4 ♖e8 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 ♘g3



12...♕c7

Black prepares to play ...c5-c4 at some point. 12...♕a5 is also very popular, when 13 ♖a3 would transpose to the previous main game. However, White can also try 13 ♗e2!? and now:

a) 13...b5 14 0-0 b4 15 ♘d1 left Black a little overextended in Dorfman-Chiburdanidze, USSR 1982.

b) 13...♕b4 14 a5 b5 and Black was fine in Gulko-Geller, Biel 1976.

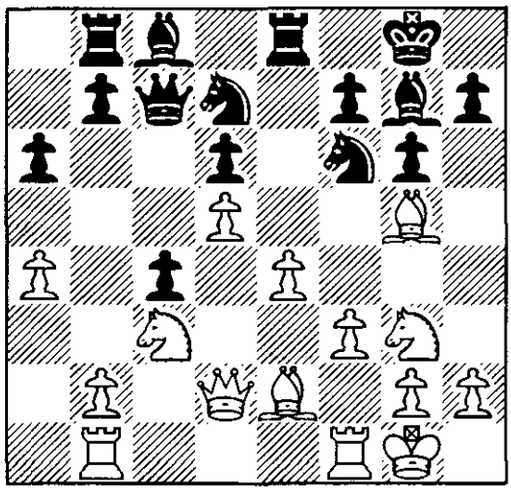
c) 13...♘e5 14 0-0 ♕b4 15 a5 b5 16 axb6 ♕xb6 was also okay for Black in Giorgadze-Zapata, Dortmund 1984.

13 ♗e2

13 ♗c4 provokes 13...♘e5, but it is by no means clear that the knight is particularly well placed there in this variation, e.g. 14 ♗e2 c4 15 0-0 ♖b8 16 ♗e3 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖a7 ♕d8 19 ♘a2!? and White had good control of the queenside in Suba-Hebden, Hastings 1983/84.

13...c4 14 0-0 ♖b8 15 ♖ab1!

A very thematic move, preparing b2-b4. After 15 ♗e3 h5 15 ♖fc1 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 b4 cxb3 18 ♘xb5 ♕b6+ 19 ♗e3 ♘c5 the black b-pawn was dangerous in Menadue-Hodgson, Ramsgate 1984.



15...♘c5

15...b5 is naturally met by 16 axb5 axb5 17 b4 with a firm grip on the queenside. Kapengut then suggests the pawn sacrifice 17...cxb3 18 ♖xb3 b4 19 ♘a2 ♘c5 20 ♖xb4 ♘b3, but this does not seem sufficient to me after the calm 21 ♕e1.

16 ♗xc4 ♘xa4 17 ♘xa4 ♕xc4 18 b3 ♕c7 19 ♖fc1 ♕d8 20 ♔h1 ♗d7 21 ♘b2 ♗b5 22 ♕f4

Plachetka gives this an exclamation mark, but 22 ♘c4 is much more circumspect.

22...♖e5

Black passively accepts his fate. Instead 22...♘xd5! 23 exd5 f6 24 ♘e4 fxg5 25 ♘xg5 ♖f8 26 ♕g4 ♗d7 would have been fine for him.

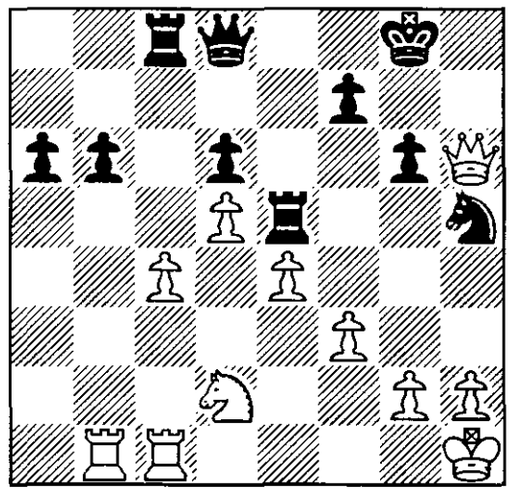
23 ♘c4 ♗xc4 24 bxc4 b6 25 ♘f1?

The correct retreat was 25 ♘e2, since now 25...♘xd5? fails to 26 ♕xe5.

25...♖c8 26 ♘d2?

Another poor decision. 26 ♘e3 was the logical follow-up to White's previous move, when 26...h6 27 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 28 ♘g4 ♗g5 29 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 30 ♕xf7+ ♔xh6 31 f4 ♖xe4 32 fxg5+ ♕xg5 is equal (Plachetka).

26...h6! 27 ♗xh6 ♘h5 28 ♕e3 ♗xh6 29 ♕xh6



29...♘g3+ 30 hxg3

Or 30 ♔g1 ♘e2+.

30...♖h5+ 31 ♕xh5 gxh5 32 ♘f1 b5 33 cxb5 ♖xc1 34 ♖xc1 axb5 35 ♘e3 b4 36 ♘f5 b3 37 ♖b1 ♕b6 38 e5 dxe5 39 d6 ♕b5 40 g4 hxg4 41 fxg4 ♕d3 0-1

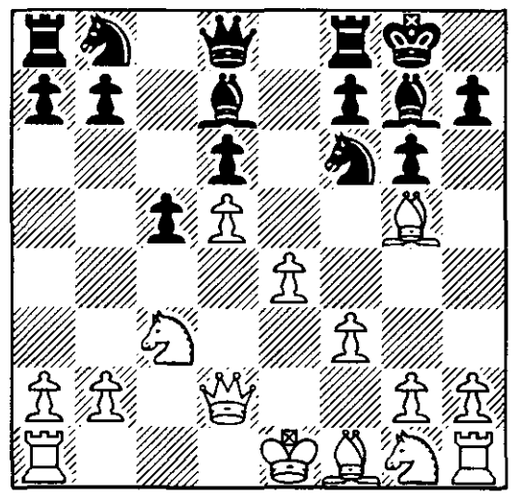
After 42 ♖b2 ♔f8 43 d7 ♕xd7 44 ♖xb3 Black comes back for the rook with 44...♕d1+.

Game 41

C.Ionescu-Wahls

Novi Sad Olympiad 1990

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♕d2 ♗d7!?



An interesting offbeat idea which takes the game away from the normal

theoretical channels. Black intends to force through ...b7-b5 at some stage, possibly supported by ...♘a6-c7 and/or ...♖b8.

The actual move order of the game was 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗g5 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗d7.

10 a4

This seems unnecessarily wary. Several other moves have also been tried here:

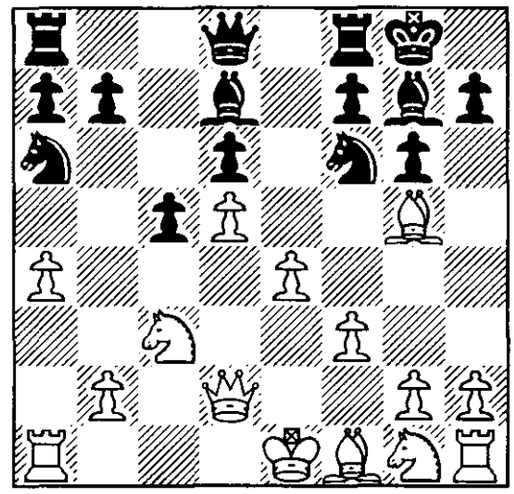
a) 10 g4?! (White cannot really justify this aggression) 10...♖e8 11 h4 b5!? 12 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 13 ♘xb5 ♕b6 14 ♘c3 ♘bd7 15 ♔f1 ♘e5 16 ♕e2 ♖ab8 and Black had Benko Gambit-type compensation for the pawn in Delchev-Nenashev, Hania 1994.

b) 10 ♗c4 (the bishop will probably be a target for ...b7-b5 here) 10...♘a6 11 ♘ge2 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 0-0 a6 14 ♕d3 ♕c8 15 f4 b5!? 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 19 ♗xb5 ♘xb5 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♕xb5 ♖b8 with an unclear position in Ker-Nenashev, Singapore 1995.

c) 10 ♗d3 ♘a6 11 ♘ge2 (or perhaps 11 a3 ♖c8 12 ♘ge2 c4 13 ♗c2 ♘c5 14 0-0 ♖e8 15 ♔h1 ♕b6 16 ♗e3 ♕a6 17 ♗d4 and White was slightly better in Lautier-Piket, Leid rapidplay 1995) 11...♖b8 12 0-0 b5 13 a3 c4 14 ♗c2 ♘c5 15 ♗e3 ♕c7 16 ♗d4 and again White was slightly on top in Lautier-Piket, Leid 1995.

d) 10 ♘ge2 ♘a6 (10...b5?! is premature after 11 ♘g3, e.g. 10...c4? 12 a4 b4 13 ♘d1 and White was already well on top in Solozhenkin-Maki, Tampere 1992) 11 ♘g3 11...♘c7 12 ♗e2 b5 13 ♘d1 and now instead of 13...♕e7 14 0-0 ♖fc8 15 ♘f2 b4, when Black was swiftly dealt with by 16 ♖ae1 ♕f8 17 f4 h6 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 e5 dxe5 20 ♘fe4 ♗g7 21 f5 gxf5 22 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 23 ♖xf5 ♖d8 24 d6 ♘e6 25 ♗c4 ♕e8 26 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 27 ♖xf6 1-0 in Adorjan-Hazai, Budapest 1984, perhaps Black can try 13...a5 14 0-0 a4 hoping to create a distraction on the queenside.

10...♘a6



11 ♗c4

After 11 ♘ge2 ♘b4 12 ♘g3 Black should play 12...a6 13 ♗e2 ♖b8 14 0-0, although the knight on b4 may get in the way of the b-pawn's route from b7 to b4.

11...♘b4 12 ♘ge2 a6 13 a5?!

This allows Black to place his bishop on the active b5-square. I prefer 13 0-0 ♖b8 14 ♘g3, transposing to the previous note.

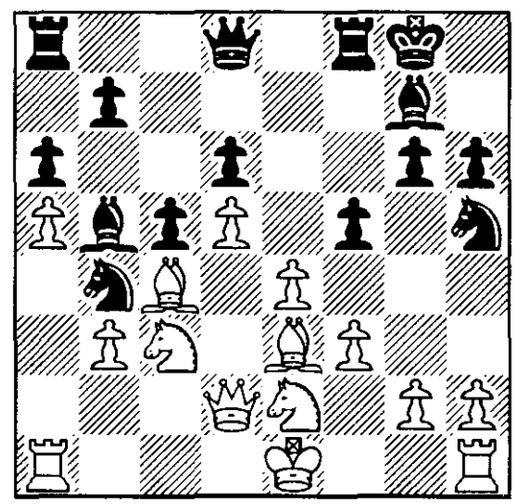
13...♗b5! 14 b3

After 14 ♗xb5?! axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♖xa5 16 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 Black has assumed control of the queenside.

14...h6! 15 ♗f4

15 ♗e3 allows Black to reorganise his pieces with 15...♗xc4 16 bxc4 ♘d7.

15...♘h5 16 ♗e3 f5!



17 ♖a3

This is a horrible square for the rook, but it is already hard to suggest alternatives, e.g. 17 ♗xh6 fxe4! (not 17...♗xh6? 18 ♕xh6 ♘c2+ 19 ♔d2 ♘xa1 20 ♕xg6+ ♘g7 21 ♖xa1 with a very messy situation) 18 ♗xg7 e3 19 ♕d1 ♘xg7 and Black has excellent chances.

17...f4 18 ♗f2 ♗d7!

Black decides that the bishop could come in useful for a kingside attack.

19 0-0 g5 20 h3 ♕f6 21 ♖b1 ♘g3

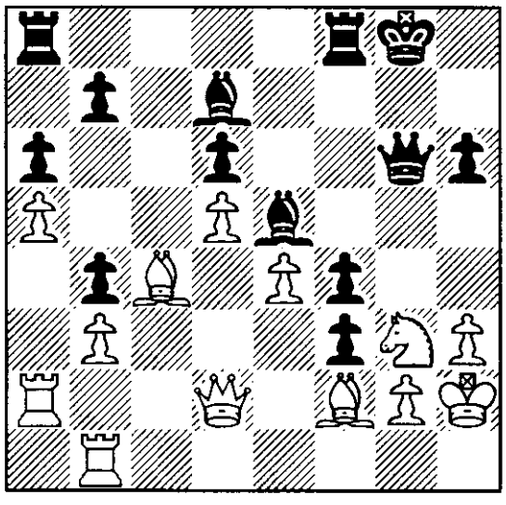
White does not have enough pieces on the kingside to defend his king.

22 ♘a2 g4 23 ♘xb4 cxb4 24 ♖a2

Or 24 ♕xb4 gxf3 25 ♘xg3 ♕g6! 26 gxf3 fxg3 27 ♗e3 ♖xf3 with a crushing attack.

24...gxf3 25 ♘xg3 ♕g6 26 ♔h2 ♗e5!

Black is in no hurry to snatch the knight as it is not going anywhere. After this move it is all plain sailing.

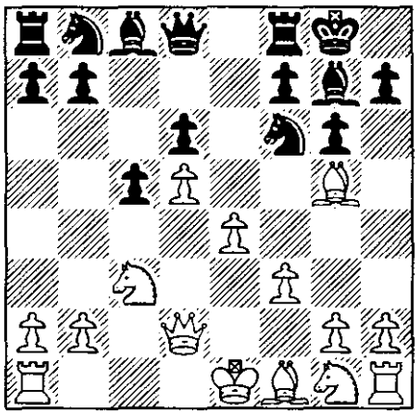


27 ♕e1 ♖f7 28 ♗f1 fxg2 29 ♗xg2 ♖g7 30 ♔g1 fxg3 31 ♗e3 ♕h5 32 ♕xb4 ♗xh3 33 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 34 ♖g2 ♖f8! 35 ♕d2 ♖f2 36 ♗xf2 gxf2+ 37 ♕xf2 ♗h2+ 0-1

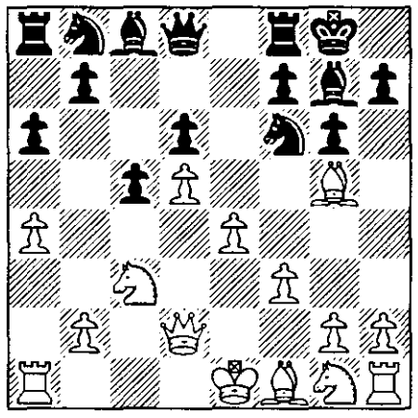
Summary
Clearly the main lines with 9...h6 10 ♗e3 a6 11 a4 h5 (or 11...♖e8) as in Games 37 and 38 are Black's best chance in the Sämisch variation. By playing actively on the kingside Black keeps his opponent off guard and does not allow White to organise one of his key breakthroughs, f2-f4 or b2-b4. In contrast, the rather outdated lines with ...♕a5 and ...♕c7 (Games 39 and 40) seem to allow White an easy life. Finally, 9...♗d7, as in Game 41, is a dynamic way of taking the game into less well charted territory, though I doubt whether it is enough for full equality.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3 ♗g7 8 ♗g5

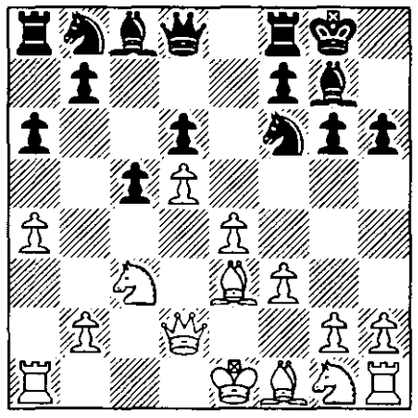
8...0-0 9 ♕d2 *(D)* **h6**
9...a6 10 a4 *(D)*
10...♕a5 – *Game 39*
10...♖e8 – *Game 40*
9...♗d7 – *Game 41*
10 ♗e3 a6 11 a4 *(D)* **h5**
11...♖e8 – *Game 38*
12 ♘ge2 – *Game 37*



9 ♕d2

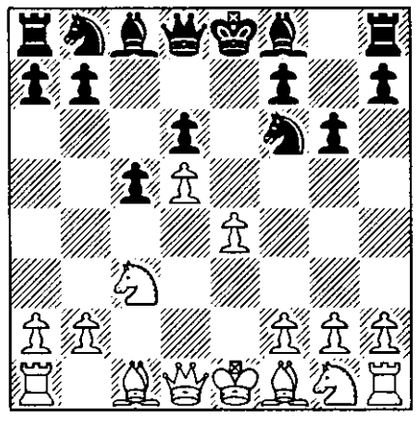


10 a4



11 a4

CHAPTER SEVEN



Other Systems for White after 6 e4 g6 (7 ♗d3 and 7 ♘ge2)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6

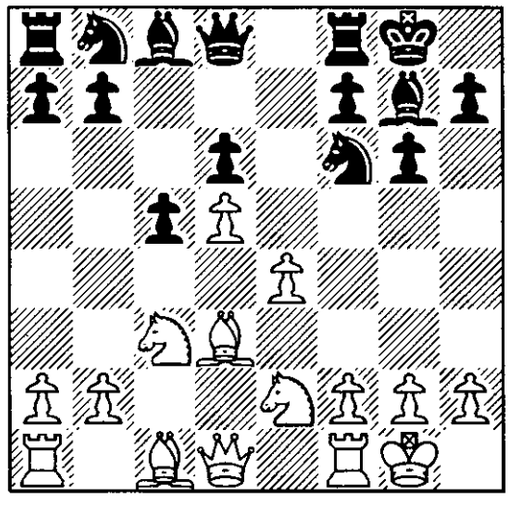
In this chapter we shall consider two very similar systems, 7 ♗d3 (which is usually followed by 8 ♘ge2) and 7 ♘ge2 (after which White usually opts to place the light-squared bishop on e2 after playing ♘g3). The point of these systems for White is to overprotect the e4-pawn, thereby removing one of Black's main areas of counterplay. Furthermore, the f-pawn is free to advance to support the possible march of the e-pawn to e5. It is easy to underestimate White's idea and Black needs to be prepared in this line.

Clearly White is strong on the kingside and in the centre in these variations and it is therefore not surprising that Black's counterplay usually focuses on the queenside. We shall consider various systems for Black after 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0, including routine development with 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 (Game 42), the placement of the queen's knight on c7 after 9...♘a6 (Game 43), an attempt to exchange light-squared bishops with 9...b6 (Game 44) and finally the somewhat bizarre-looking ...♘g4 (Game 45). The final game in this chapter (Game 46) looks at 7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗e2.

Game 42
Knaak-Enders
East Germany 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0

Sometimes 9 h3 is played to rule out the idea of 9...♘g4 (see Game 45) but in many cases h2-h3 may prove to be a move that White can do without.



9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7

With 9...a6 10 a4 thrown in Black is more or less obliged to develop his pieces in conventional fashion with ...♘bd7 and ...♖e8 in some order, since he is no longer

able to use the a6-square for a knight or a bishop.

11 h3

This move is almost always played as a matter of routine, but can White do without it? The alternatives are:

a) 11 f4 gives Black the choice between Psakhis's 11...c4!? 12 ♗xc4 ♘g4 and the quieter 11...♕c7 12 ♘g3 transposing to note 'd' below.

b) 11 f3 (this looks too slow as White will probably now want to play f3-f4 at some point) 11...♕c7 12 b3 ♖e8 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♖xb6 16 ♖a3 ♘e5 and Black had no problems at all in Miles-W.Schmidt, Dubai Olympiad 1986.

c) 11 ♗g5 ♕c7 12 b3 ♘e5 13 ♗c2 ♖b8 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♕xb6 and again Black was fine in Meulders-Grünfeld, Amsterdam 1982.

d) 11 ♘g3!? ♕c7 12 f4 ♖e8 13 ♕f3, when we have reached the main line position except that White has played the very useful ♕f3 instead of h2-h3.

11...♕c7

Black gives himself the option of ...c5-c4 followed perhaps by ...♘c5 or ...♖b8 and ...b7-b5. It is also worth considering the idea of 11...♖e8 12 ♘g3 ♖b8 (after the immediate 12...h5 13 ♗g5 I prefer White's position) 13 f4 h5!?, trying to embarrass the white knight.

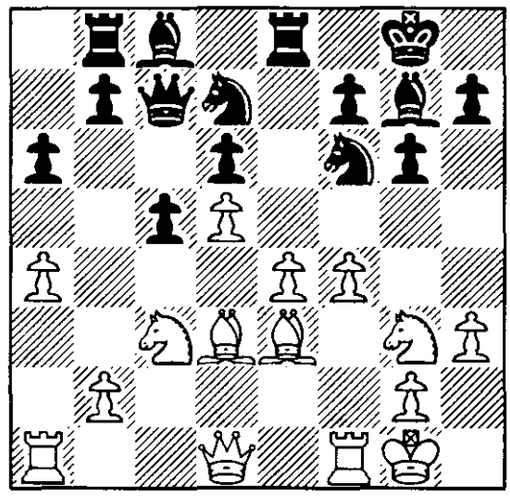
12 f4

If 12 ♘g3 then Black should get on with things on the queenside with 12...♖b8!, intending ...c5-c4 and either ...♘c5 or ...b7-b5, since after 12...♖e8?! 13 f4 c4 14 ♗c2 followed by ♕f3 White has saved some time as he may be able to do without ♗e3.

12...♖b8 13 ♗e3

After 13 ♘g3 c4! 14 ♗c2 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♗e3 b4 17 ♖a7 ♕d8 Black's queenside counterplay is well underway and he stands well.

13...♖e8 14 ♘g3



There are numerous ways to reach the diagram position. In fact, the move order of the main game was 9...♖e8 10 ♘g3 a6 11 a4 ♕c7 12 h3 ♘bd7 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 14 f4.

14...c4 15 ♗c2 ♘c5

Here 15...b5 is less accurate due to 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a7 ♕d8, when we have reached the same position as in the note to White's 13th move except that Black has played the ineffective ...♖e8 instead of ...b5-b4. This is obviously in White's favour, although the situation is still very unclear after, for example 19 ♕f3 b4 or 18 ♕d2 b4 (but not 18...♘c5? 19 ♗xc5 dxc5 20 e5 ♘d7 21 d6 White was already close to winning in Knaak-Berend, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988).

16 ♗d4

16 ♕f3 b5! 17 axb5 axb5 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♗d4 transposes to the main game, while if 20 ♗f4 instead of 20 ♗d4 then Black has 20...♘fd7! with excellent compensation for the exchange after 21 ♗xe5 ♘xe5.

16...b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 e5

After 18 f5 Black should block things up on the kingside with 18...g5, as in Knaak-Bangiev, Bremen 1998, in order to gain sufficient time for his own queenside advance with ...b5-b4.

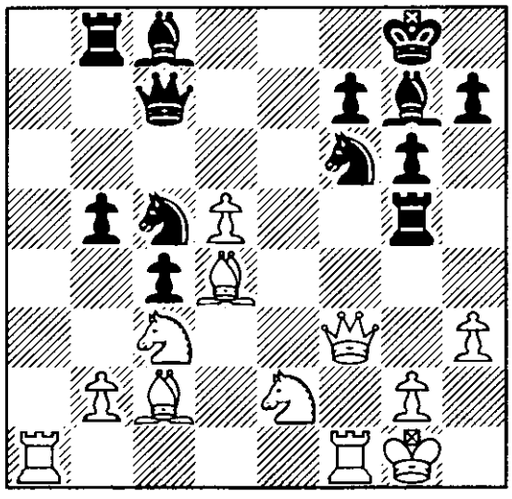
18...dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♕f3 ♖g5

20...b4 is recommended in some quarters, although this looks risky to me

after 21 ♕f4!? and if 21...♘e8 then 22 d6!, as in Zsinka-Danner, Budapest 1985.

21 ♘ge2

The original game in this variation ended in a catastrophe for White after 21 ♘ge4? ♘cxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♘g4 23 d6 ♗xd4+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xd6 25 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 0-1 in Timman-Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 1975, whilst 21 ♗xf6? ♖xg3! 22 d6 ♕xd6 and 21 ♕f2 ♖xg3! 22 d6 ♕xd6 23 ♗xc5 ♖xg2+!! are also winning for Black.



Finally we have reached the critical position for this whole variation.

21...♘h5

Black may have enough compensation for the exchange after 21...♗f5 22 ♕e3 ♗h6 23 ♕e5! ♕xe5 24 ♗xe5 ♗xc2! (not 24...♖e8? 25 ♗xf6 ♗xc2 26 ♘d4 b4 27 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 28 ♘xc2 bxc3 29 bxc3 ♖d8 30 ♖a7 with a won endgame for White in Anton-Lecroq, correspondence 1981) 25 ♗xb8 ♘xd5, as in Pähtz-Goldberg, Nordhausen 1986, although I am not too keen on the position of the black rook on g5 after 26 ♗d6.

22 ♗xg7

After 22 d6 ♕d7 23 ♗xg7 Black can flick in 23...♗b7!

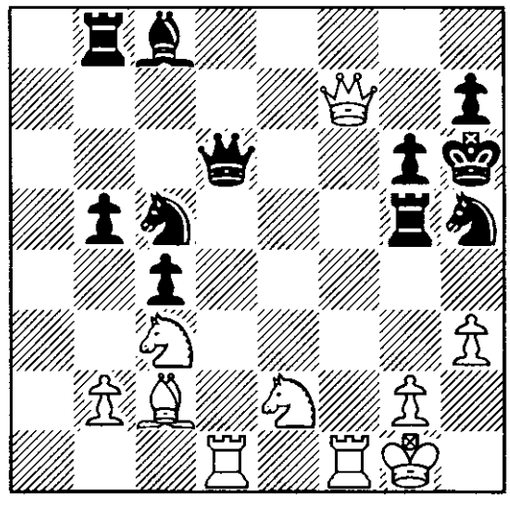
22...♔xg7

22...♘xg7? runs into 23 d6! ♕b7 24 d7!! ♕xd7 25 ♕f4 – Knaak.

23 d6 ♕xd6 24 ♕xf7+ ♔h6

The king is well guarded on this square.

25 ♖ad1



26...♕e5??

A bad mistake. Knaak suggests 25...♕c6 with an unclear position, but 25...♘d3! just looks good for Black to me, e.g. 26 ♘e4 ♕b6+ 27 ♔h2 ♖f5.

26 h4! ♖g4 27 ♖d5 ♕e3+ 28 ♖f2 ♗b7

Or 28...♘d3 29 ♘d1! with 30 ♖xh5+ to follow.

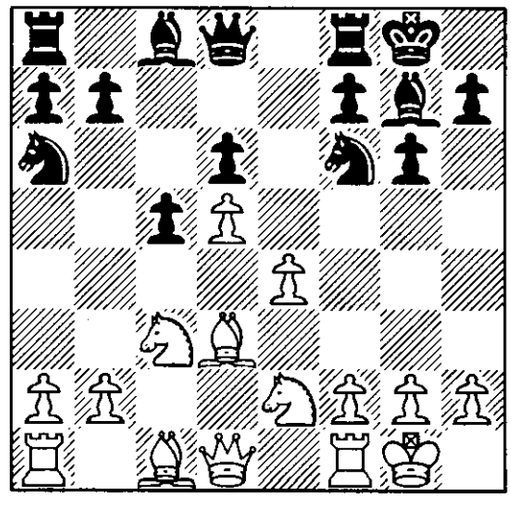
29 ♖xh5+ ♔xh5 30 ♕xh7+ ♕h6 31 ♘f4+ ♖xf4 32 ♗xg6+ 1-0

Game 43

Knaak-Maus

Hamburg 1991

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘a6



In typical fashion Black simply intends

to get his pawns moving forwards on the queenside with ...♘c7, ...♖b8, ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

10 h3

10 ♘g3 allows Black the option of mixing things up by 10...♘g4!? 11 ♗e2 ♕h4 with an improved version of Game 45, whilst 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗h4 (or 11 ♗f4 ♘g4!) 11..g5 12 ♗g3 ♘h5 also gives Black a good game.

10...♖e8

After 10...♘c7 11 ♘g3 ♖b8 12 a4 a6 Black is ready to force through ...b7-b5, but the drawback of this move order is that White does not need to play ♘g3 and can save time with 11 a4 a6 12 ♗g5! ♖b8 (or 12...h6 13 ♗f4 and 14 ♕d2) 13 f4, when he enjoyed domination of the centre in Knaak-Anastasian, Yerevan 1988.

11 ♘g3

Garry Kasparov has demonstrated a good response to 11 ♗g5 which exploits the weakness of the e-pawn, i.e. 11...h6 12 ♗h4 c4! 13 ♗c2 ♘c5 14 f3 ♗d7 with an equal game in Haik-Kasparov, Evry (simultaneous) 1989. The actual move order in the main game was 9...♖e8 10 ♘g3 ♘a6 11 h3.

11...♖b8

11...♘c7 12 a4 a6 13 ♗g5 ♖b8 would transpose to the game, whilst after 12...b6 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♗a6 15 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 16 ♕d2 ♔h7 17 f4 White built up a dangerous attack in Knaak-Telljohann, German Championship, Bremen 1998.

12 ♗g5

White delays a2-a4 until the black knight is safely back on c7, as otherwise 12 a4 ♘b4! would be fine for Black.

11...♘c7 13 a4 a6 14 f4 b5

14...h6 15 ♗h4 does not really help Black at all.

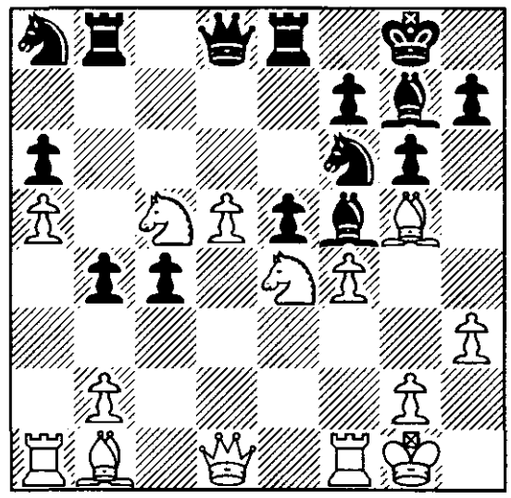
15 a5?!

A very strange decision, as it is rarely a good idea to leave such a pawn out on a limb on a5, and besides after 15 axb5 White at least has the a-file to play with.

15...c4 16 ♗b1 b4 17 ♘a4 ♘a8?

Very passive. 'Knights in the corner, make you a mourner.' Something like 17...♘b5 18 ♘b6 ♕c7 was called for.

18 e5 dxe5 19 ♘e4 ♗f5 20 ♘ac5



20...♖b5?

20...exf4 (Knaak) would still have been okay for Black.

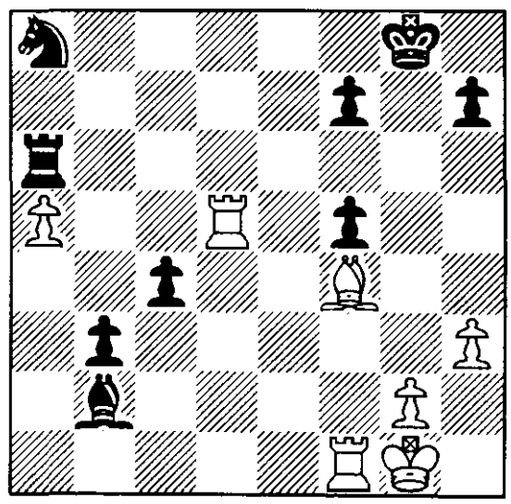
21 fxe5 ♖xc5

Black must have missed that he could not play 21...♖xe5 because of 22 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 24 ♘d7.

22 ♘xc5 ♖xe5 23 ♗xf5 gxf5

23...♖xd5 runs into the beautiful 24 ♘d7! ♖xd1 25 ♖axd1 followed by ♘xf6+.

24 ♕d4 ♕xd5 25 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♘xa6 ♖e6 27 ♖ad1 ♖xa6 28 ♖xd5 ♗xb2 29 ♗f4 b3



30 ♖e1?

After 30 ♔f2-e2, although the black pawns look dangerous, it is the woeful position of the black knight on a8 that is of more significance.

30...♔g7 31 ♖e3 h6 32 ♔f1 ♗f6 33 ♖b5 ♖c6 34 ♖b8??

The losing move. Knaak gives 34 ♖g3+ ♔h7 35 ♗c1 ♘c7 36 ♖b6 ♖xb6 37 axb6 ♘a6 'unclear', but it is probably time for White to head for a draw with 35 ♖b7 b2 36 ♖xf7+ ♔h8 37 ♖f8+ ♔h7 38 ♖f7+.

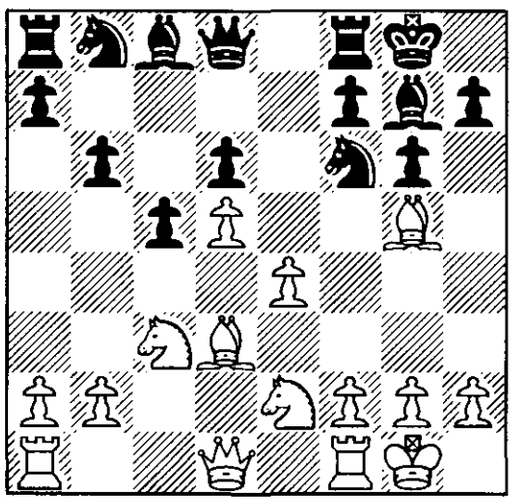
34...b2 35 ♖e1 c3 36 ♖xa8 c2 37 ♖b8 c1♕ 38 ♗xc1 bxc1♕ 39 ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 40 ♔e2 ♖a1 0-1

Game 44
Bass-Benjamin
New York open 1985

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 b6

Although this variation is quite popular for Black, in my opinion it may be slightly too slow to promise full equality.

10 ♗g5



There is no need for White to take time out with 10 h3 in this variation as it may simply be a waste of time. However, 10 a4!? is also possible and now:

a) 10...♗a6 11 ♘b5! ♗xb5 12 axb5 ♘bd7 13 ♘c3 ♖e8 14 ♖a4 ♕e7 15 ♗d2 with a small advantage for White in Knaak-Bönsch, Plauen 1980.

b) 10...♘a6 11 ♗g5 ♘b4 12 ♗c4 a6 13 ♕d2 ♕e8 14 ♘g3 ♘g4 15 ♗e2 f6 16 ♗f4 ♘e5 17 ♗e3 ♗d7 18 f4 ♘f7 19 f5 ♘e5 20 h4 and White held a big initiative on the kingside in Seirawan-Fedorowicz, USA Championship, Estes Park 1987.

10...♗a6

After 10...h6 11 ♗h4 ♗a6 (or 11...g5 12 ♗g3 ♘h5 13 h3 ♘xg3 14 ♘xg3 with a strong grip on the light squares on the kingside in Knaak-Rossmann, Potsdam 1974) 12 f4 Black had weakened himself on the kingside for no good reason in Semkov-Schindler, Würzburg 1991.

11 f4 ♗xd3

Perhaps Black can try 11...c4 12 ♗c2 b5, as in Mititelu-Seifert, Wroclaw 1976, e.g. 13 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♕b6+ 14 ♕d4 ♘fd7, when White is in danger of becoming overextended.

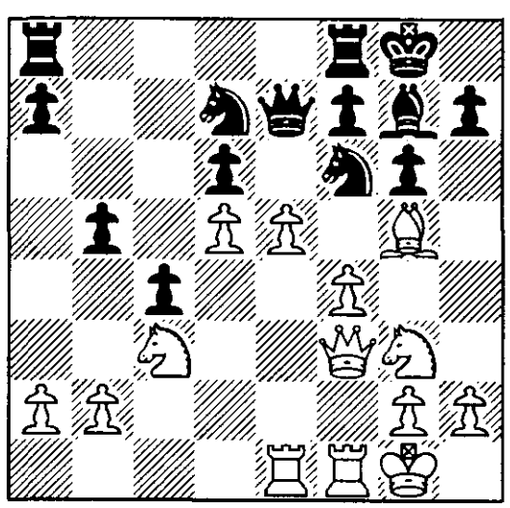
12 ♕xd3 ♘bd7 13 ♘g3 ♕e7?

This looks like a truly horrible square for the queen. After 13...a6 14 a4 ♕c7 Black has chances for counterplay with ...c5-c4 and ...b6-b5.

14 ♖ae1

Black was probably already wondering what possessed him to place the queen on e7 as e4-e5 is already in the air.

14...c4 15 ♕f3 b5 16 e5



After this obvious move the game is effectively already over.

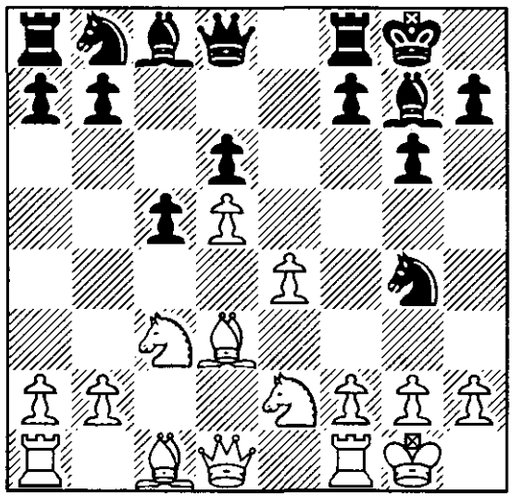
16...dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖xf6 b4 22 ♘b5 ♖fc8 23 ♘e4 a6 24 ♘d4 c3 25 bxc3 bxc3 26 ♖c6 ♖xc6 27 dxc6 ♖d8 28 c7 ♖c8 29 ♘f6+ ♔g7 30 ♘d5 f5 31 ♔f2 ♔f7 32 ♔e2 c2 33 ♔d2 1-0

Game 45

Knaak-A.Shneider

Stara Zagora Zonal 1990

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘g4!?



An interesting attempt to cut across White's plans.

10 h3!

10 ♗f4 ♘a6 is fine for Black, e.g. 11 ♕d2 (not 11 ♘g3? ♘xh2!) 11...♘e5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4 13 ♕c1 ♘b4 14 ♗b1 ♘e5 with equality in Miles-Perenyi, Porz 1986.

10...♘e5 11 ♗c2 ♘a6

11...f5 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 ♘f4 was very loose for Black in Blees-Carlier, Rotterdam 1990. After the game move White faces a key decision.

12 a3

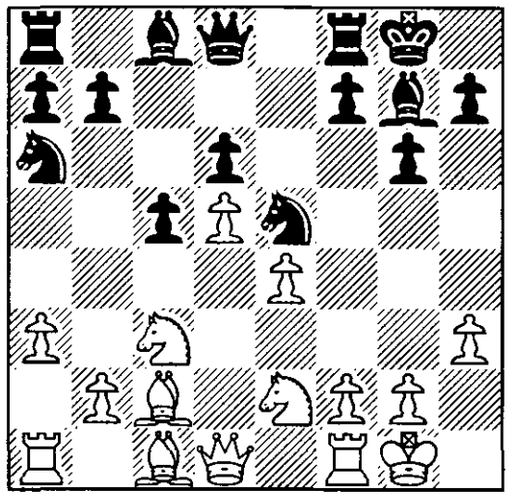
It is very tempting to play 12 f4, putting the question to the black knight immediately, and this move may be stronger than the game continuation. Black then has:

a) 12...♘c4 13 b3 and now:

a1) 13...♘a5 leaves the knight in a very odd position, having spent five moves to end up on the edge of the board, e.g. 14 a3 b5 (perhaps 14...f5!?) 15 ♖b1 b4 16 ♘a2 bxa3 17 ♗xa3 ♖b8 18 ♔h2 with a slight plus for White in Serper-Nenashev, Novosibirsk 1989.

a2) 13...♘b6 14 f5!? ♖e8, as in Nemet-Smirin, Geneva 1992, and now 15 fxg6 should be a little better for White.

b) 12...♘d7!? 13 ♗e3 ♖b8! (or 13... ♘c7 14 a4 a6 15 ♘c1!? ♖e8 16 ♗f2 ♖b8 17 ♘b3 and White was again slightly better in Arkhipov-Tsarev, Naberezhnie Chelni 1988) 14 a3 b5 with good counterplay in Paulsen-Hartmann, West Germany 1987.



12...♖b8

12...c4 13 ♗e3 ♖e8 14 f4 ♘d7 15 ♗d4 should be slightly in White's favour.

13 f4 ♘c4 14 ♗d3 ♘xb2

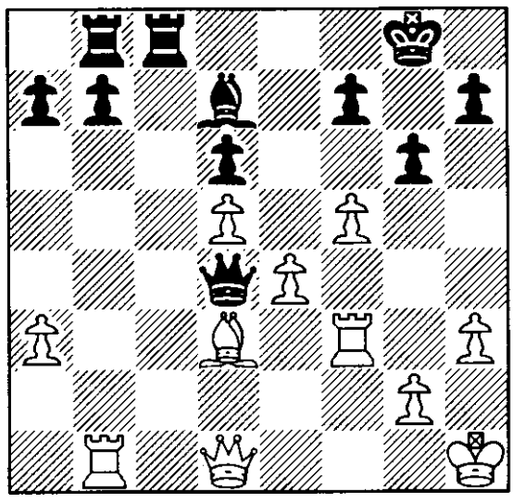
14...b5 15 ♘xb5! is better for White, but 14...♘a5!? 15 ♗e3 b5, as in Urban-Stajcic, Miedzybrodzie 1991, should be okay for Black.

15 ♗xb2 c4 16 ♗xc4 ♕b6+ 17 ♔h1 ♕xb2 18 ♗xa6

White simplifies to a promising position in which he retains chances of a kingside attack. Psakhis suggests 18 e5 (threatening ♘a4) 18...♕b6 19 e6, but 19...♕a5 with ideas of ...♘c5 and ...b7-b5 may be okay.

18...♗xc3 19 ♘xc3 ♕xc3 20 ♗d3 ♗d7

21 ♖f3 ♕d4 22 ♖b1 ♖fc8 23 f5



Now White enjoys a troublesome initiative on the kingside.

23...♖c3 24 ♕d2 gxf5 25 ♕h6! ♖xd3 26 ♕xd6 ♖c8

Or 26...♖d8 27 ♕g3+ and ♖xd3.

27 ♕xd7 ♖cc3 28 ♖xd3

28 ♕e8+ ♔g7 29 ♖xf5 would have won on the spot, although the best that Black can do in the game is to reach a hopelessly lost queen endgame.

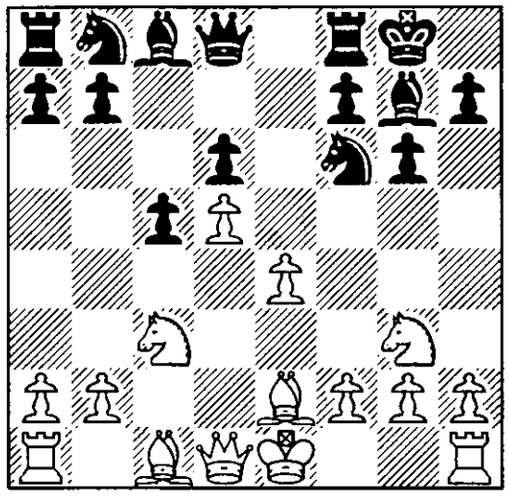
28...♖xd3 29 ♕d8+ ♔g7 30 ♕g5+ ♔f8 31 ♕d8+ ♔g7 32 ♕g5+ ♔f8 33 ♕xf5 ♖d1+ 34 ♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 35 ♔h2 ♕a1 36 e5 ♕xa3 37 ♕f6 ♔g8 38 d6 ♕a4 39 ♕g5+ ♔f8 40 ♕d8+ ♕e8 41 ♕f6 ♔g8 42 h4 h6 43 ♕e7 ♕a4 44 d7 ♕f4+ 45 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 46 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 47 ♔h2 1-0

Game 46
Novikov-Gufeld
Tbilisi 1988

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗e2

This variation is identical to that of Games 42-45 except that the white bishop goes to e2 rather than d3. On the downside the bishop is much less actively placed on e2, so White is less likely to be able to crash through with a kingside attack. On the other hand, the e2-square is much more secure than d3, where for example White had to worry about ...c5-c4 in Game 42. In short, 9 ♗e2 is much more solid and will probably result in White playing on the queenside rather than the kingside.

The actual move order of the game was a King's Indian Defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘ge2 0-0 6 ♘g3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5.



9...♘a6

To my eyes the idea of ...♘a6-c7 looks best here. The standard configuration with 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♖e8 (10...♖b8 11 ♗f4 ♕e7 is similar to 10...♖e8 11 ♗f4 ♕e7 below) 12 ♗f4 ♘e5 (or 12...♕e7 13 ♕d2 ♖b8 14 ♖b1 and b2-b4) 13 ♕d2 (by transposition) 13...b6 14 h3 gave White the better chances in I.Sokolov-Jobava, European Team Championship, Georgia 1999. It is very difficult to see how Black can generate real counterplay here.

10 0-0 ♘c7 11 a4

The New Zealand IM Russell Dive, who specialises in this variation, generally prefers to play the immediate 11 ♖b1, keeping open the option of a2-a3 and b2-b4. However, after 11...♖e8 12 ♗f4 ♘e5 14 ♕d2 h5 Black had reasonable counter-chances in Dive-Hamdouchi, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

11...a6

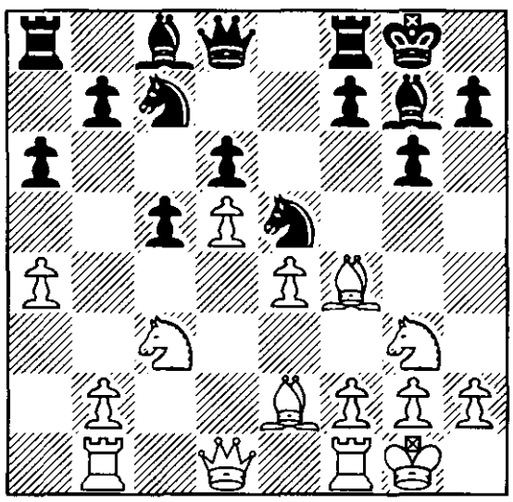
Perhaps Black should wait with this

move as it encourages White's queenside aspirations. Black can consider 11...♘d7 instead, intending to meet 12 ♗f4 with 12...♘e5 and 12 ♖b1 with 12...h5!?, when he has decent prospects.

12 ♖b1

A multi-purpose move, defending the b2-pawn and preparing to possibly advance it to b4. White went the whole hog with his queenside strategy in Tyrtania-Pajeken, Germany 1998, i.e. 12 ♗g5 ♖b8 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 ♖fb1!? b5 15 axb5 ♘xb5 16 ♗xb5 axb5 17 b4 with a slight plus.

12...♘d7 13 ♗f4 ♘e5



14 ♕d2

14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 a5 16 ♖b1 ♘a6 is assessed as equal by Gufeld, but this seems optimistic to me as White has a nice grip on the position after 17 ♗e3 ♘c5 18 ♘b5.

14...h5

The immediate 14...b5 seems more active, e.g. 15 axb5 ♘xb5 16 ♘xb5 axb5 17 ♗xb5 ♕b6 with reasonable counterplay (Gufeld).

15 f3

This move, preparing to meet ...h5-h4 with ♘h1-f2, looks too routine. Instead 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗h6 h4 17 ♘h1 ♗d7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 f4 ♘f7 20 ♘f2 b5 21 axb5 axb5 22 b4 led to a promising position for White in Giorgadze-Yurtaev, Simferopol 1988.

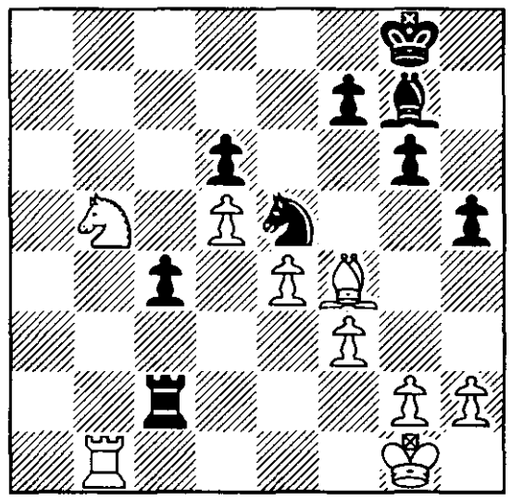
15...b5!? 16 axb5 ♘xb5 17 ♘xb5 axb5 18 ♗xb5 ♕b6 19 ♗e2 ♖a2 20 ♘h1 ♗a6 21 ♘f2 ♖b8 22 ♘d1 ♗xe2

After 22...♘d3 23 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 24 ♕xd3 c4+ 25 ♗e3 cxd3 26 ♗xb6 ♖xb6 Black would have had plenty of play for the pawn. In fact, this looks preferable to the game continuation.

23 ♕xe2 ♕b3 24 ♘c3 ♖xb2 25 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 26 ♕xb2

Not 26 ♖b1?? ♕xb1+ 27 ♘xb1 ♖xb1+ 28 ♔f2 ♖b2 29 ♗d2 c4 and Black is winning.

26...♖xb2 27 ♖b1 ♖c2 28 ♘b5 c4



29 ♘a3

Gufeld gives 29 ♘xd6 c3 'and wins', but there still seems plenty of play in the position after 30 ♖b8+ ♔h7 31 ♔f1!

29...♖c3 30 ♘b5 ♖b3 31 ♖xb3 cxb3 32 ♘a3 f5 33 ♔f1 fxe4 34 fxe4 ♔f7 35 ♔e2 b2

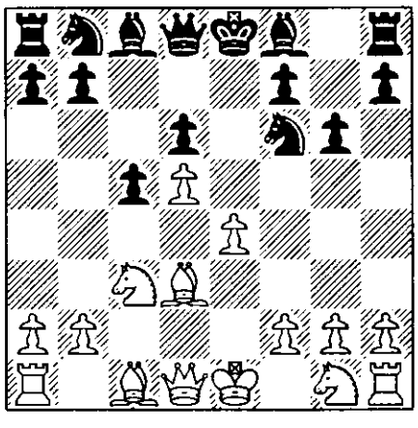
Black loses patience and starts a flawed strategy of placing all of his pawns as the same colour as his bishop. Gufeld suggest 35...♔e7 followed by ...♘d7-c5, when Black retains some winning chances.

36 ♘b1 h4 37 h3 ♗f6 38 ♔d2 g5 39 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 40 ♔c2 ♔f6 41 ♘d2 ♗f4 42 ♘c4 ♗e5 43 ♘e3 ♗d4 ½-½

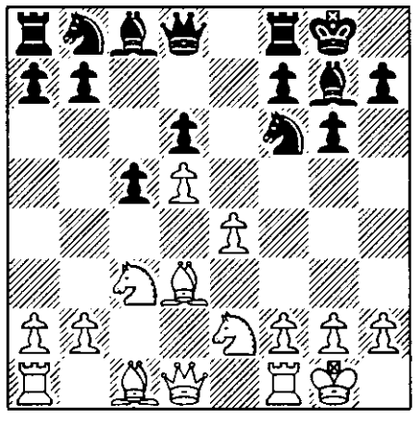
Summary
Both 7 ♗d3 and 7 ♘ge2 take the game away from the main theoretical channels and present Black with new problems to solve. However, he should be able to achieve a reasonable game in both variations. Against 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0, the unusual 9...♘g4!? (Game 45) is well worth considering, whilst if 9 h3 instead of 9 0-0 then simple development with 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♕c7 (Game 42) fits the bill. Finally, against 7 ♘ge2 (Game 46) the idea of ...♘a6, leaving the d7-square open for the king's knight seems like the best policy.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6

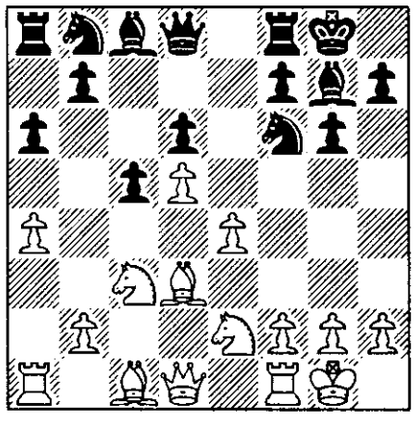
7 ♗d3 *(D)*
7 ♘ge2 – Game 46
7...♗g7 8 ♘ge2 0-0 9 0-0 *(D)* **a6**
9...♘a6 – Game 43
9...b6 – Game 44
9...♘g4 – Game 45
10 a4 *(D)* *– Game 42*



7 ♗d3

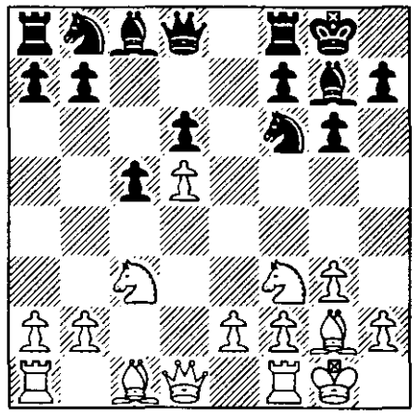


9 0-0



10 a4

CHAPTER EIGHT



Fianchetto System (6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0)

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0

The fianchetto system may at first sight appear to be one of the quieter systems at White's disposal. Nevertheless, such is the double-edged nature of the Modern Benoni that even here great complications can arise, as we shall see. The advantage of the kingside fianchetto from White's point of view is that on g2 the bishop does a good job defending the d5-pawn and controlling the e4-square. The downside is that the bishop deserts the important f1-a6 diagonal, thereby encouraging Black to go for a swift ...b7-b5.

The first two games in this chapter cover the main line with 9...a6 10 a4 ♖e8 (or 10...♘bd7 11 ♘d2 ♖e8) 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4. This position has arisen countless times in practice, with Black usually choosing between a plan of attacking on the kingside with 13...♘e5 (Game 47) or playing on the queenside with 13...♘b6 (Game 48). Both variations can lead to very dynamic play.

In general, Black has achieved very good results in the main line, which has led many White players to abandon the traditional ♘d2-c4 plan and switch to a direct attempt to break through with e2-e4-e5, prefaced by ♗f4. In Games 49 and 50 we discuss the merits of 10...♖e8 11 ♗f4 and 10...♘bd7 11 ♗f4 respectively.

The final two games in this chapter deal with an alternative approach for Black with 9...♘a6-c7. The old idea of 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 a4 is seen in Game 51, while in Game 52 the sharper 11 ♘c4 is discussed.

Game 47
Lacrosse-Sadvakasov
Saint Vincent open 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 a6

The actual move order in the game was the commonly seen 9...♖e8 10 ♘d2 a6 11 a4 ♘bd7.

10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2

White's other possibilities here are dealt with in Game 49.

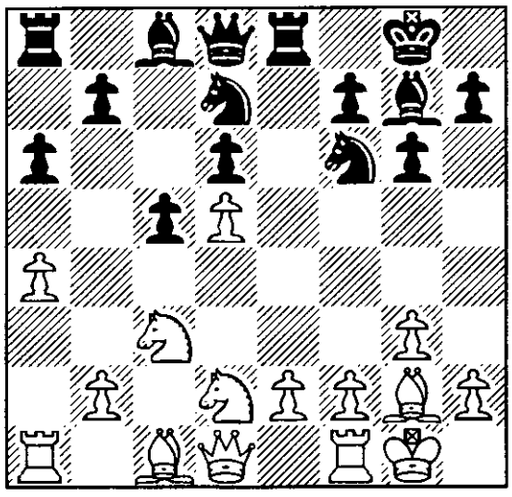
11...♖e8

Black almost always plays this move, but it is worth considering a couple of alternatives which avoid the main body of theory:

a) 11...♖b8 12 ♘c4 ♘e8 (12...♘b6? loses to 13 ♘xd6 ♗g4 14 a5) 13 ♕b3!? ♘e5 14

♘b6 f5 15 ♗d2 ♗d7 16 f4 left Black on the back foot in Birnboim-Bischoff, Munich Zonal 1987.

b) 11...♘h5!? 12 ♘ce4 (12 ♘c4 ♘e5 falls in with Black's plans, while 12 ♘de4 can be met by 12...♘e5!? with the idea of ...f7-f5) 12...♘df6 13 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 (13...♗xf6 14 ♘c4 ♗d4 15 e3 ♗g7 16 e4 slightly favoured White in Nikolic-De Firmian, Wijk aan Zee 1986) 14 ♘c4 ♖b8 15 ♘b6 ♕d8 16 ♕b3 ♖e8 17 ♖e1 ♘f6 was roughly level in Reefschläger-Kindermann, German Bundesliga 1984.



12 h3

A useful waiting move, which deprives the black knights use of the g4-square. Other moves are not particularly threatening for Black:

a) After 12 e4 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 f4 ♖e8 16 ♔h1 b5 Black had achieved his queenside break in Conquest-Sigurjonsson, Brighton 1981.

b) 12 ♖b1 ♖b8 13 b4 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 bxc5?! b4 16 ♘ce4 ♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 dxc5 left Black in control in Vaganian-Tseshkovsky, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974. Things went downhill surprisingly fast for White in that game after 18 e4 ♗a6 19 ♕b3 c4 20 ♘xc4 ♘xe4 21 ♖e1 ♘c5! 0-1.

c) 12 a5 b5 (there is not much wrong with 12...♖b8 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 either) 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 ♘b3 ♘c4 15 ♖a4 (15 ♕d3 ♖b8! 16 ♕xc4 ♖b4 17 ♕d3 ♖xb3 allows Black tremendous pressure on the queenside) 15...♘b6 16 ♖a2 ♘c4 17 ♖a4 ♘b6 18 ♖a2 ♘c4 19 ♖a4 is a common draw by repetition, as for example in Lengyel-Adorjan, Hungarian Championship 1973. Instead of 14 ♘b3, White can try 14 e4 ♖b8 15 ♕c2, as in Ilincic-Petronic, Yugoslavia 1997, but then 15...♘g4!? with the idea of ...♘e5 should be okay for Black, e.g. 16 h3 ♘e5 17 f4 ♘ec4 18 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 19 ♖e1 ♘a5!? intending ...♘b3-d4.

d) 12 ♕b3 ♖b8 (12...♘e5 is premature because of 13 f4) 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘b6 ♘fd7 15 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 16 h3 c4! gave Black a good game in Kiseleva-Degraeve, Montpellier 1998.

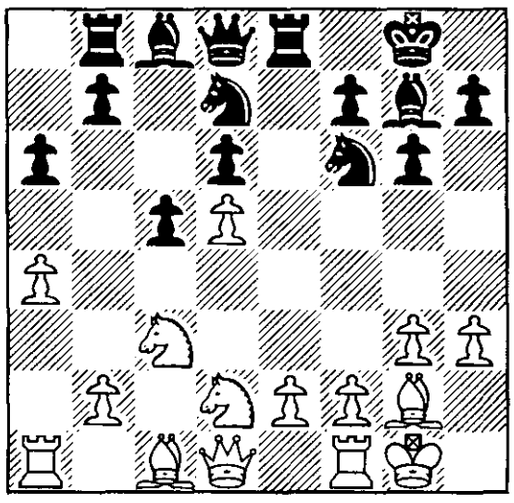
e) 12 ♖a2 ♖b8 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 b3 has the virtue of clearing the long diagonal in order to play ♗b2. However, 15...♘g4 16 ♗b2 ♘e5 should be fine for Black.

f) 12 ♘c4 ♘e5 (12...♘b6 is also fine) 13 ♘xe5 (13 ♘a3 ♗d7 is a much improved version of Game 48 for Black) 13...♖xe5 is too simplistic to promise White much, since as usual in the Benoni an exchange of knights rather frees Black's position. For example, 14 ♗f4 (14 ♕c2 ♖h5!? 15 e4 ♘g4 16 h3 ♘f6 17 g4 ♗xg4 18 hxg4 ♘xg4 19 ♗f4 ♕h4 was quite scary for White in Arkell-Emms, Hastings 1995, while 14 e4 ♖e8 15 h3 ♘d7! gave Black a good game in Wojtkiewicz-Fedorowicz, Los Angeles 1998) 14...♖e8 15 ♕c2 ♕e7 (15...♘h5 16 ♗d2 f5 17 a5 ♗d7 18 e3 ♘f6 19 ♘a4 ♖c8 20 ♘b6 ♖c7, as in Arkell-Ward, 4NCL 1999, is also okay for Black) 16 ♖fe1 ♘g4! 17 h3 ♘e5 18 a5 ♗f5 19 ♕b3 ♖ab8 20 ♘a4 ♗d7 21 ♘b6 ♗b5 with a promising position for Black in Arkell-Plaskett, Hastings 1996/97. It is well worth giving the finish to this game: 22 ♖ab1 g5 23 ♗d2 f5 24 ♕c2 ♕f6 25 b4 c4 26 ♖bc1 f4 27 ♗c3 fxg3 28 fxg3 ♖f8 29 ♖f1 ♕e7 30 ♗e4 ♘d3! 31 ♖xf8+? (31 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 32 exd3 cxd3 33

♗d3 ♕d4+ 34 ♔h2 ♗xd3 35 ♕d2! would have been level according to Plaskett) 31...♖xf8 32 exd3 cxd3 33 ♕g2 ♗xc3 34 ♖xc3 d2 35 ♕xd2 ♖f1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕xe4 37 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 38 ♖c8+ ♗e8 39 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 40 ♕d2 ♕e4 41 ♕c3+ ♔g8 42 ♕c8+ ♔g7 43 ♕c7+ ♔g6 44 ♕xd6+ ♖f6 45 ♕c5 ♕e2+ 46 ♔g1 ♖f1 mate.

12...♖b8

Preparing the thematic ...b7-b5. White's next move is almost invariably seen, since 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 is really nothing for him.



13 ♘c4 ♘e5

A double-edged decision. Black must be prepared to play very actively or the knight will soon be forced back by f2-f4. Black's alternatives here are considered in the next main game.

14 ♘a3

12 ♘xe5, with similar play to the note to White's 12th move, is harmless.

14...♘h5

With most of White's pieces on the queenside Black prepares an assault on the other wing with ...f7-f5. If instead 14...♗d7 15 f4 ♘h5 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 17 g4 ♘g3, as in Saeed-Norwood, London 1984, Psakhis prefers White after 18 ♖f2 b5 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘c2 b4 21 ♘b1.

15 e4

Neither 15 ♔h2 f5 nor 15 e3 f5 does anything to cut across Black's plans, while 15 f4? ♘xg3! 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 17 ♘c4 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 b5 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘e3 ♘xf1 21 ♘xf1 ♕h4 was very good for Black in Donner-Ree, Amsterdam 1979, and 15 g4 ♕h4 16 ♘e4 h6 17 gxh5 ♗xh3 18 ♘g3 ♘g4 19 ♗f4 ♗d4! also gave Black a powerful attack in Kakageldyev-Tseshkovsky, Ashkhabad 1978.

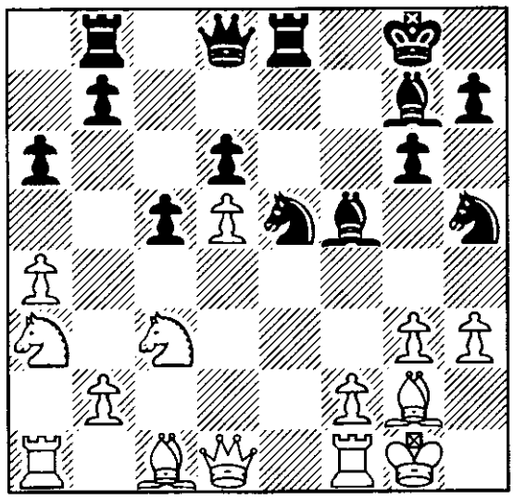
15...f5!?

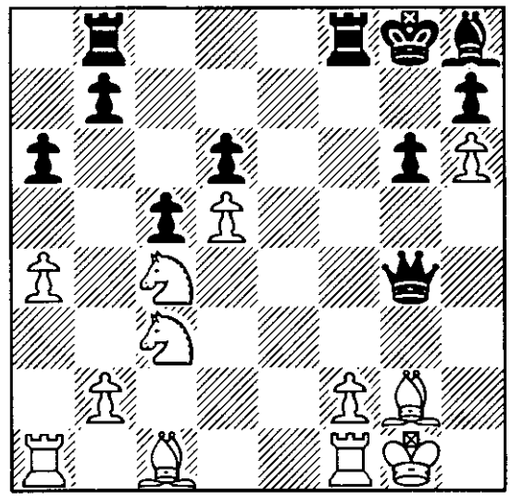
This implies a piece sacrifice with 16 exf5 gxf5 17 g4. Black has also tried:

a) 15...♖f8 (preparing ...f7-f5, but this may be too slow) 16 ♔h2 (16 g4? ♕h4 17 gxh5 ♗xh3 18 h6 ♗h8 19 ♘e2?! f5 20 exf5 ♖xf5 was horrible for White in Scheeren-Timman, Leeuwarden 1980) 16...f5 17 f4 b5! 18 axb5 (not 18 fxe5? ♘xg3! 19 ♔xg3 ♗xe5+ 20 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 21 ♔g1 ♕g3 22 ♖f3 ♕h2+ with a typical attacking position in Birnboim-Arnason, Randers 1982) 18...axb5 19 ♘axb5 fxe4 20 ♗xe4 (20 ♘a7 is much less clear after 20...e3 or 20...♗d7) 20...♗d7 21 ♕e2! ♕b6 22 ♘a3 ♖be8 and now Kasparov's suggestion of 23 ♕g2! leaves Black struggling for counterplay.

b) 15...♗d7 (this may be Black's best choice) 16 a5 (16 f4?! runs into 16...♘xg3! 17 fxe5 ♗xe5 18 ♘c4 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h2 ♘xf1+ 20 ♕xf1 b5 21 ♘xd6 ♗e5+ 22 ♗f4 ♕f6 with a vicious attack in Kuligowski-Levitt, German Bundesliga 1988, while 16 g4 b5! 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘c2 b4 19 ♘e2 ♕h4!? 20 ♘e3 f5 also gives Black the initiative according to Psakhis) 16...♕xa5 17 g4 ♘f6 18 g5 ♘h5 19 f4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 ♕xa1 21 ♘xd6 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h2 ♖e7 23 ♕f3 b5 24 e5 b4 with mutual chances in Hulak-Nunn, Toluca Interzonal 1982. However, in this variation Black can also consider 21...♗xc3!? 22 bxc3 ♖ed8 (threatening ...♗xh3) 23 ♕f3 ♗b5 24 ♘xb5 axb5 25 f5 ♕a6 26 e5 ♘g7 when Black quickly took control in Kinsman-Norwood, London Lloyds Bank Masters 1985.

16 exf5 ♗xf5





17 g4

It is too late for White to back down now, e.g. 17 ♖e1? ♘d3 18 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 19 ♘c2 ♘xf2 20 ♔xf2 ♗xc2 21 ♕xc2 ♗d4+ 22 ♔f3 ♕e1 23 ♘e4 ♖f8+ 24 ♔g4 ♖e8 25 ♕d3 ♖xe4+ 26 ♗xe4 ♘f6+ 27 ♔f3 ♕f2 mate was the dramatic conclusion of Najdorf-Rubinetti, Quilmes 1980.

17...♗xg4 18 hxg4 ♕h4 19 gxh5 ♖f8 20 h6!

White must flick in this move before he gives up his queen. 20 ♗g5 ♕xg5 21 ♘e4 ♕h4 22 ♕b3 ♖f4 23 ♖fe1 ♖bf8 24 ♕g3 ♕xh5 ended in disaster for White after 25 ♖e3 ♘g4 26 ♖e2 ♗d4 27 ♖f1 ♘e5 28 ♖e3 ♖g4 29 ♕h3 ♗xe3 30 ♕xh5 ♘f3+ 31 ♔h1 gxh5 0-1 in Kharlamov-Dvoirys, USSR Championship semi-final 1980.

20...♗h8 21 ♘c4

21 ♘e4 ♘g4 22 ♕xg4 ♕xg4 23 ♘c4 transposes to the note to move 23, while in this variation White cannot diverge with 23 ♘c2? due to 23...♖f3! 24 ♘g5 ♖f5 25 f4 ♕e2 26 ♖f2 ♕d1+ 27 ♔h2 ♖xg5 and wins (Psakhis).

21...♘g4 22 ♕xg4 ♕xg4

Here we have reached one of the most complicated positions of the whole Modern Benoni. White has three pieces for the queen, which would normally be a good trade, except that here White is still lagging behind in development and his kingside is very vulnerable.

23 ♘xd6

White goes the whole hog. After 23 ♘e4 Black has a choice between:

a) 23...b5 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♘cxd6! and now:

a1) 25...♖b6 26 ♗e3 ♗e5 27 ♗xc5 ♕f4 28 ♖fe1 ♖xd6 29 ♘xd6 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 ♗xd6 with a complicated game which ended in a draw in Kosanic-Lukic, correspondence 1980.

a2) 25...♗e5 26 ♗e3 ♖f3 (after 26...♕h4 27 f4 Black could have tried 27...♖xf4!? 28 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 29 ♖xf4 ♕xf4 with a very messy game in A.Johansen-Yndesdal, correspondence 1993) 27 ♖a7 ♖bf8 and now 28 ♗xc5 was the best defence for White in Toro Sanchez-Trindade, San Pedro de Jujuy 1981.

b) 23...♖be8!? 24 ♘cxd6 ♖e5 25 ♖a3 ♖xd5 26 ♖g3 and here instead of 26...♕e6, as in Marovic-Kapengut, Yerevan 1971, Black can consider 26...♕d7!? with a very unclear game.

23...♗e5 24 ♘de4 ♖f3!?

This may be gilding the lily. After 24...♖f5 (or 22...♕h4!? 23 ♖e1 ♖f5!) 25 ♗e3 ♖bf8 26 ♗xc5 (Psakhis suggests 26 f4 ♖xf4 27 ♗xf4 ♗d4+ 28 ♘f2 ♕xf4 29 ♘ce4 ♖f5 30 ♖a3 with a clear plus for White, but perhaps Black can try 29...♗xb2!? with the idea of using the c-pawn as a diversion) 26...♖h5 27 f3?? ♖h1+ 28 ♔xh1 ♕h4+ White resigned in Neshits-Petrovic,

Han Piesku 1980. Instead of 27 f3?? White should still have tried 27 ♖fe1 ♖h2 28 ♘g3 ♗xg3 29 fxg3 ♕xg3 30 ♖e2 with reasonable defensive prospects.

25 ♗e3

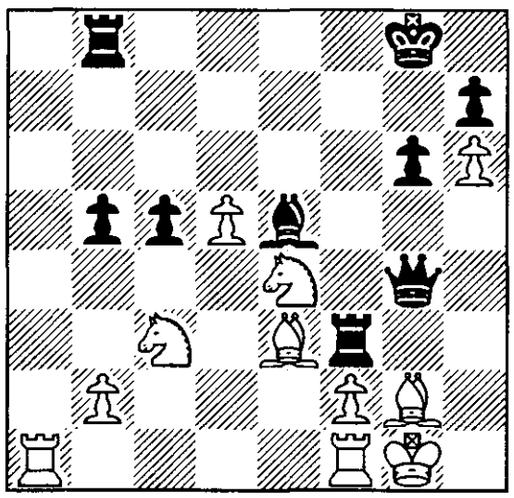
White was successful with 25 ♘g5 ♖bf8 26 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 27 ♖e1 ♖xf2 28 ♔xf2 ♗g3+ 29 ♔g1 ♗xe1 30 ♗e3 in V.Kovacevic-Nemet, Karlovac 1979, but Black could have improved here with 25...♖f5! 26 ♘ce4 ♖d8, when White's pieces are tangled up.

25 ♖e1 with the idea of 26 ♖e3 may be better. Perhaps Black should prevent this with 25...♗d4!? 26 ♗e3 ♖bf8 with a very complicated game.

25...b5

In Bijl-Pirisi, Tapolitsa 1980, Black crashed through after 25...♖bf8 26 ♗xc5 ♖8f5 27 ♖fe1 b6 28 ♗xb6 ♖h5 29 ♗c5? ♖h2 30 ♘g3 ♖xg3 31 fxg3 ♕xg3 32 ♖e2 ♖h1+ 0-1. However, I do not see a clear way forward after 29 ♘e2! instead of 29 ♗c5?

26 axb5 axb5



27 ♘xc5??

Walking into trouble. After 27 ♗xc5! (removing the bishop from the fire of the rook on f3 and thereby preparing to meet ...♖h3 by f2-f4) 27...b4 28 ♘a4 White still has reasonable prospects of consolidating his material advantage.

27...♖h3 28 ♖fe1 ♖h2 0-1

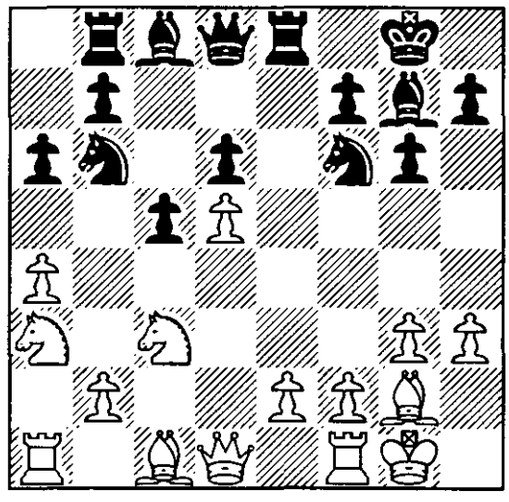
Game 48
Cvitan-Cebalo
Yugoslav Ch., Novi Sad 1985

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♗g2 g6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2 ♖e8 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 ♘b6

Although this move is more 'positional' than 13...♘e5, it can still lead to very complicated play.

14 ♘a3

The knight rather gets in the way after 14 ♘e3 ♘fd7, e.g. 15 a5 ♘a8 16 ♘c4 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♕d3 b5 19 axb6 ♘xb6 with easy equality in Pachman-Mecking, Manila Interzonal 1976, while 14 ♕b3 ♘xc4 15 ♕xc4 ♘d7 soon went badly wrong for White in Hertneck-Gheorghiu, Lugano 1984, after 16 f4?! f5 17 e4 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h2 ♘f6 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 g4 ♘xg4+ 21 hxg4 ♕h4+ 22 ♗h3 ♗xg4 23 ♕d3 ♖e3 0-1.



14...♗d7

14...♗f5 only helps White, since after 15 g4! ♗d7 16 ♗f4 he does not have to worry about an irritating ...♘h5.

15 e4

Numerous other ideas have been tried here:

a) 15 ♗f4?! is ineffective due 15...♘h5! 16 ♗xd6 (16 ♗d2 ♘xa4! 17 ♘xa4 b5 18 ♘c3 b4 19 ♘c2 bxc3 20 bxc3 ♘f6 led to a

quick victory for Black in Seres-Gheorghiu, Fribourg 2000) 16...♗xc3 17 ♗xb8 ♗xb2 18 ♗a7 (or 18 g4 ♕xb8 19 gxh5 ♘xa4 20 ♖a2 ♘c3 and Black was winning in Hort-Marovic, Banja Luka 1976) and now in Gheorghiu-Ljubojevic, Manila 1974, White would have been in trouble after 18...♘xa4! (Psakhis).

b) 15 ♕c2 also allows 15...♘xa4! 16 ♘xa4 b5 17 ♘c3 b4, as in Godzeav-Magerramov, USSR 1987.

c) 15 ♖e1 ♕c7 16 e4 ♘xa4! 17 ♘xa4 b5 18 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 19 ♗e3 ♕c8! gave Black a good game in Akopian-Yudasin, Lvov 1990.

d) 15 a5 ♘c8 16 ♘c4 is more or less equally as popular as the main line, although Black can then make use of the b5-square with 16...♗b5 17 ♕b3 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♘d7 with a level game in Rubinetti-Gheorghiu, Buenos Aires 1979.

15...♘c8

Black intends to swing the knight over to a7 to support ...b7-b5. Instead 15...♕c7 16 ♗e3 ♘c8 (16...♘xa4 17 ♘xa4 ♘xe4 18 ♘c2 b5 19 ♘c3 ♘xc3 20 bxc3 ♗xc3 21 ♖xa6 b4 22 ♗f4 ♖b6 23 ♖xb6 ♕xb6 offered Black decent compensation for the knight in the form for two powerful passed pawns in Osnos-Moskalenko, Sverdlovsk 1984; in this variation Black could even consider 22...♗b5!? as 23 ♖xd6 ♗e5 favours Black and after 23 ♗xd6 ♕d7 24 ♗xb8 ♗xa6 he will regain some of the sacrificed material) 17 ♗e3 transposes to the main game. White tried to avoid this transposition in Mikhalevski-De Firmian, Copenhagen 2000, but after 16 ♖b1 ♘xa4! 17 ♘xa4 b5 18 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 19 ♗e3 ♕c8 20 ♖c1 ♕d8 Black was fine. Note that the immediate 15...♘xa4?! is risky due to 16 ♘xa4 b5 17 e5!? ♖xe5 18 ♘xc5 dxc5 19 ♗f4.

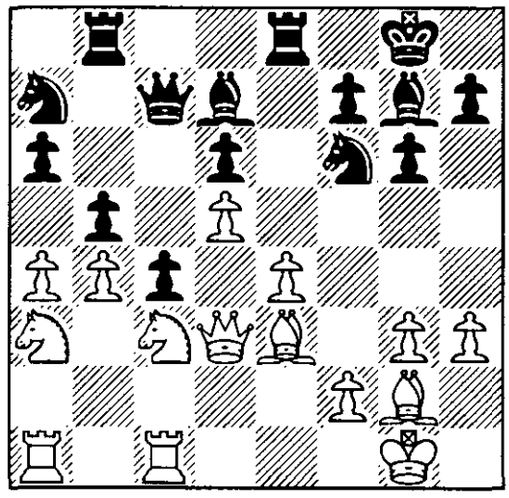
16 ♕d3 ♕c7 17 ♗e3

Neither 17 ♖b1?! c4! 18 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 19 ♘xc4 b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘a5 b4 (Hulak) nor 17 ♗d2 b5!? 18 axb5 c4! 19 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 20 ♘xc4 axb5 21 ♘a5 b4 22 ♘e2 ♘xe4 23 ♗xb4 ♗xb2, as in Reefschläger-Brunner, German Bundesliga 1986, offer anything for White.

17...♘a7

Here 17...b5?! 18 axb5 c4 is less effective because of 19 ♕xc4 (19 b6 is also possible here – Osnos) 19...♕xc4 20 ♘xc4 axb5 21 ♘d2 b4 22 ♘d1 ♗b5 23 ♖e1 ♗d3 24 f3 ♘d7, as in Quinteros-Gheorghiu, Novi Sad 1982, and now perhaps 25 ♖c1, when Black still has a lot to do to prove sufficient compensation for the pawn.

18 ♖fc1 b5 19 b4 c4



20 ♕f1

This was Korchnoi's recommended improvement over 20 ♕e2 bxa4 21 ♘xc4 ♘b5 22 ♘xb5 (or 22 ♘xa4 ♘xe4 23 ♘d2!? ♘bc3!) 22...♗xb5 when Black was already slightly better in Korchnoi-Franco, Lucerne 1982. Psakhis recommends 20 ♕d2 bxa4 21 ♘xc4 ♕xc4 22 ♗xa7 ♖bc8 23 e5 ♖xe5 24 ♘xa4, as in Birnboim-Grünfeld, Israeli Championship 1986, but 24...♕e2!? (Emms) should be okay for Black.

20...bxa4 21 ♘xc4 ♘b5

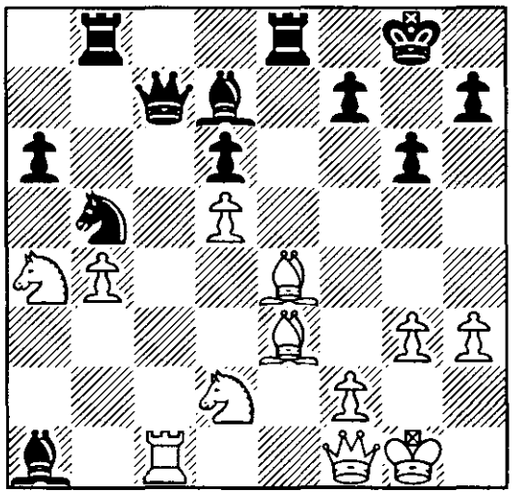
A probable upgrade on 21...♖xb4, when instead of 22 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♗xa7 ♘xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♖bxe4 25 ♗c5 ♕xd5 26 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 and Black was better in Quinteros-Kir.Georgiev, Thessaloniki

Olympiad 1984, Kiril Georgiev's suggestion of 22 ♘a2! ♖b7 23 e5 dxe5 24 d6 ♕b8 25 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 is very unclear.

22 ♘xa4

Instead 22 ♗f4 ♘xc3 23 ♗xd6 (not 23 ♘xd6?! ♕b6 24 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♖xc3 ♘xd5) 23...♕a7 24 ♗xb8 ♕xb8 25 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 26 ♖e3 ♗xa1 27 ♕xa1 f5 seems okay for Black.

22...♘xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xa1 24 ♘d2



24...♗xh3

24...♗c3 is well worth considering since after 25 ♕d3 (25 ♔h2 a5!? also looks promising) 25...♖bc8 26 ♘b6 ♖cd8 (Glek and Piskov) Black seems to have a lot of pressure, e.g. 27 ♘b1 ♖xe4 28 ♕xe4 ♗f5 29 ♕h4 ♗xb1 30 ♖xb1 ♖e8 and Black retains the initiative.

25 ♖xc7

25 ♗g2 ♗xg2 26 ♔xg2 ♕b7 27 ♖xa1 ♕xd5+ 28 ♘f3 ♖e4 (Cebalo) gives Black excellent play.

25...♗xf1 26 ♖c1 ♖xe4! 27 ♘xe4 ♗d3 28 ♘xd6 ♗e5 29 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 30 ♘xc8 ♘d6

After all the fireworks the game now heads inexorably towards a draw.

31 ♘e7+

After 31 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 32 ♗c5 Cebalo gives 32...♗b5 33 ♘b6 ♗e5 34 d6 ♗c6 35 d7 ♗f6 with equality, but I am not sure how he intended to stop the white pawns after 33 ♘c3! Instead 32...♗e5 33 d6 ♗b5 34 ♘b6 ♗c6 looks like a safer move order.

31...♔g7 32 ♘c6 ♗f6 33 ♗f4 ♘e4 34 ♗c7?!

34 ♘c5! ♘xc5 35 bxc5 ♗e4 36 ♘b8 ♗xd5 37 ♘xa6 is just a draw.

34...♗b5 35 ♘b6 ♗c3 36 f3 ♘f6 37 ♗e5 ♗xe5 38 ♘xe5 ♘e8 39 ♘ed7 f6 40 ♘c5 ♔f7?

Cebalo recommends 40...♘d6, when Black can still play for a win.

41 ♘c8 f5 42 d6 ♘f6 43 ♘b6 g5 ½-½

Game 49
Arkell-Kinsman
4NCL 1999/2000

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 d5 e6 4 c4 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 a6

To all intents and purposes 9...♘bd7 is the virtually the same as 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 as Black will soon play ...a7-a6 and White will have nothing better than a2-a4. The only real drawback to 9...♘bd7 is the fact that Black has to meet 10 ♗f4 with 10...♕e7 as 10...♕c7? 11 ♘b5 is embarrassing. However, this is not of great significance as the I reckon the queen probably stands better on e7 in any case. In fact, the actual move order in this game was 9...♘bd7 10 ♗f4 (10 h3 a6 11 ♗f4 ♕e7 12 e4!? ♘h5 was okay for Black in Vaganian-Sax, Rotterdam 1989) 10...♕e7 11 ♕d2 (after 11 h3 Black can consider Velicka's idea of 11...♘h5!? 12 ♗g5 f6 13 ♗d2 f5 14 ♕c2 ♖b8! with an improved version of Dautov-Cebalo in note 'e3' to White's 12th move below) 11...a6 12 a4.

10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♗f4

Apart from 11 ♘d2 ♖e8 (see Games 47 and 48) several other moves have been tried for White, but they are not particularly dangerous:

a) 11 h3 ♖e8 (11...♖b8 is also okay) 12 ♖e1 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♗g5 ♕e8 15 ♖a2 h6 16 ♗f4 ♕e7 17 b3 g5 18 ♗c1 c4

was fine for Black in Razuvaev-Romanishin, Novi Sad 1982.

b) 11 e4 ♖e8 (again 11...♖b8 is also satisfactory) 12 ♖e1 c4!? (Black intends to plant a knight on d3, capitalising on the trick 13 ♕e2 ♘c5! 14 ♕xc4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 and the rook on a1 hangs) 13 ♗f1 (13 h3 does nothing to stop 13...♘c5-d3, while the over-ambitious 13 ♗f4 ♘c5 14 e5 ♘g4 15 e6 fxe6 16 dxe6 ♘d3 turned out very badly for White in Ligterink-Van Blitterswijk, Leeuwarden 2000) 13...♕c7 14 ♕e2 (14 ♕d4 ♘c5 15 ♕xc4 is the same thing) 14...♘c5 15 ♕xc4 ♗g4 with very good compensation for the pawn in Piket-Winants, Wijk aan Zee 1987.

11...♕e7

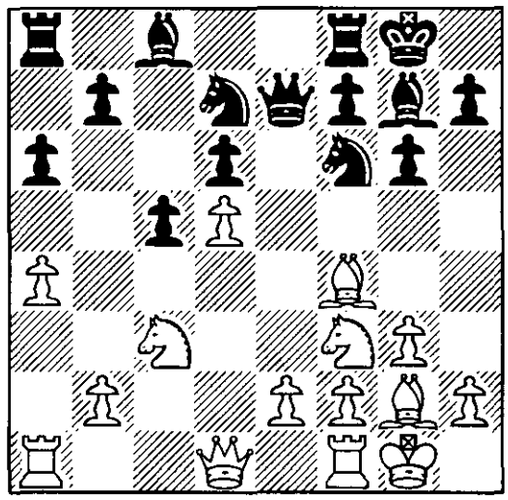
11...♕c7 is also very common, although I prefer the game move as White may be able to exploit the slightly awkward situation of the queen on c7:

a) 12 h3 ♖e8 13 ♖c1 (or 13 ♖e1 ♘h5!? 14 ♗d2 ♖b8) 13...♖b8 14 b4 ♘h5 15 ♗d2 (not 15 ♗e3?? ♘xg3) 15...cxb4! 16 ♘e4 ♘c5 17 ♘xc5 dxc5 18 ♗xb4 b6 led to a very double-edged game in Csom-Kindermann, Dortmund 1983. However, in Sherbakov-A.Kovacevic, Belgrade 2000, White devised the useful waiting move 14 ♔h2!? and achieved a good position after 14...h6 15 b4 g5 16 ♗d2 ♕d8 17 ♖b1 cxb4 18 ♖xb4. Instead 14...b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4 ♘h5 is a stiffer test of White's idea.

b) 12 ♖c1! and now:

b1) *ECO* and Psakhis give 12...♘h5 13 ♗g5 (13 ♗d2 is much less precise as White wants to encourage ...h7-h6) 13...h6 (13...♖e8 14 b4 transposes to the next note) 14 ♗d2 ♕b6 15 ♕c2 f5 '=' Nikolic-Yudasin, Tilburg rapidplay 1993, but this looks disgusting for Black after 16 ♘h4! as both 16...♔h7 17 g4!, 16...♖f6 17 ♘xg6! and 16...♘e5 17 f4 all leave Black with serious problems.

b2) 12...♖e8 13 b4 ♘h5 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗e3 (perhaps 15 ♗d2 as 15...cxb4 is no good here due to 16 ♘b5) 15...♖xe3 16 fxe3 cxb4 17 ♘e4 ♕b6 18 ♘d4 a5 and now instead of 19 ♕c2 f5, as in Nikolic-Hjartarson, Linares 1988, simply 19 ♔h1!? should be a little better for White.



12 ♕d2

Naturally White has several alternatives here:

a) After the hasty 12 e4 Black has 12...♘g4! 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 ♘de5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 with equality in Bönsch-Ehlvest, Tallinn 1983.

b) 12 ♖e1 ♖b8 13 e4 ♘g4! 14 ♘d2 ♘de5 15 ♘f1 (15 h3 g5! 16 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♕e2 was also good for Black in Scheeren-Langeweg, Leeuwarden 1980) 13...♘c4 16 ♕e2 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 h3 ♘ge5 and Black had a dream position from the opening in Smyslov-Portisch, Hungary 1978.

c) 12 a5 ♘g4! (neither 12...♖b8 13 ♘a4 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 nor 12...b5 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 e4 is good enough to equalise) 13 ♘a4 ♖b8 and now instead of 14 ♖c1?! h6 15 ♗d2 b5 16 axb6 ♘xb6 when Black was already better in Manor-Wahls, Bern 1990, Psakhis recommends 14 h3 ♘ge5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘b6 ♗d7 with a level game.

d) 12 ♖b1 should probably be met by 12...♘g4 rather than 12...♘h5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 f5 15 ♘g5, when White was soon on top in Tkachiev-David, Cannes 1999.

e) 12 h3!, preventing ...♘g4, looks like

the most testing move. Now 12...♖b8 13 e4! b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖e1 ♘e8 16 ♕e2, as in Razuvaev-Psakhis, Irkutsk 1986, is slightly unpleasant for Black, so he should probably play 12...♘h5!? (12...h6 with the idea of ...♘h5 or ...g6-g5 is also playable, although I slightly prefer White's position after 13 e4) 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 f5 and now:

e1) 15 ♗g5 ♘hf6 16 ♖b1 h6 17 ♗d2 ♘e4 18 ♘xe4 fxe4 19 ♘e1 ♘e5 worked out well for Black in Ulibin-Hall, Oakham 1992.

e2) 15 ♕b3 ♘e5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 17 f4 ♗g7 18 ♔h2 ♘f6 was roughly level in Browne-D.Gurevich, USA Championship, Estes Park 1987.

e3) 15 ♕c1!? ♘df6 (15...♘e5 16 ♘g5 ♖b8 17 a5 ♘f6 18 ♘a4 h6 19 ♘f3 ♘f7 20 ♘b6 ♘e4 21 ♗c3 ♔h7 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 slightly favoured White in Ulibin-Wedberg, Stockholm 2000) 16 ♗h6 ♗d7 17 a5 ♖ae8 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖a3! and now Black could have equalised with 19...♘e4 20 ♘xe4 fxe4 21 ♘d2 ♘f6 22 ♖e3 ♘xd5 23 ♖xe4 ♗e6 24 ♘c4 ♘c7!? in Dautov-Cebalo, Porto San Giorgio 1997. In this variation Gleizerov has suggested the possible improvement 16 ♘g5 trying to force through e2-e4, but then Black has 16...♖b8 17 ♖e1 (17 e4?! is premature due to 17...♘xe4 18 ♘gxe4?! fxe4 19 ♘xe4 ♗xh3 or 18 ♘cxe4! fxe4 19 ♖e1 ♗d4 with equality - Dautov) 17...h6 18 ♘e6 ♗xe6 19 dxe6 ♔h7 20 e4 ♘xe4! 21 ♗xe4 dxe4 22 ♘xe4 ♖be8!? (threatening ...d6-d5) or 21 ♘xe4 dxe4 22 ♖xe4 ♗d4.

12...♘g4!

Black seizes the opportunity to secure a knight on e5.

13 h3

This forces Black to play a move that he might well have played anyway. It looks more logical to try 13 ♖ab1 ♘de5 14 b4 b6 15 bxc5 bxc5 with a more or less equal game in Korchnoi-Hulak, Wijk aan Zee 1983.

13...♘ge5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 a5 ♖b8

Psakhis prefers 15...♗d7 16 ♖fb1 ♖fb8!? to meet 17 ♗h6 by 17...♗h8, but I cannot see too much wrong with the game move as 16 ♗h6 is not a threat due to 16...♘c4.

16 ♘a4 ♗d7

It may have been better to play 16...♘c4 17 ♕c2, and now not 17...♘xa5 18 ♘xc5! but instead 17...b5! 18 axb6 ♘xb6 with chances for both sides. This time 19 ♘xc5 is dubious because of 19...g5! deflecting the bishop.

17 ♘b6 ♗b5 18 b4 cxb4 19 ♕xb4?!

19 ♖ab1 was more precise, when White's queenside pressure would have granted him a slight edge.

19...g5

I did not fancy 19...♗xe2?! 20 ♖fe1 ♘d3 21 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♗xd6, but the game move fits Black's plan since if the bishop were to retreat then the e-pawn would really have been en prise.

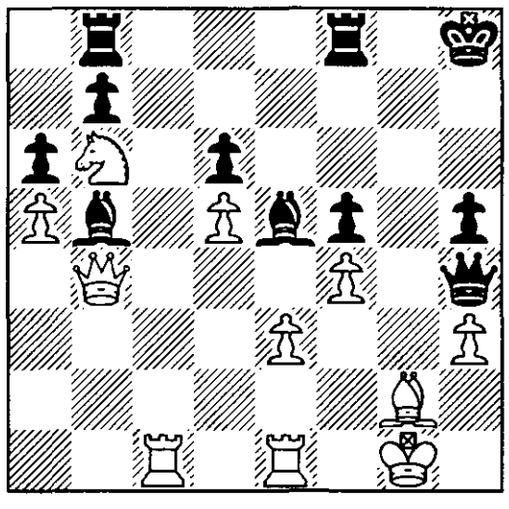
20 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♖ac1 f5 22 ♖fe1 h5

I was feeling very happy at this point as my kingside pawns are all marching forwards!

23 f4?!

This looks too loosening.

23...gxf4 24 gxf4 ♕h4! 25 e3 ♔h8

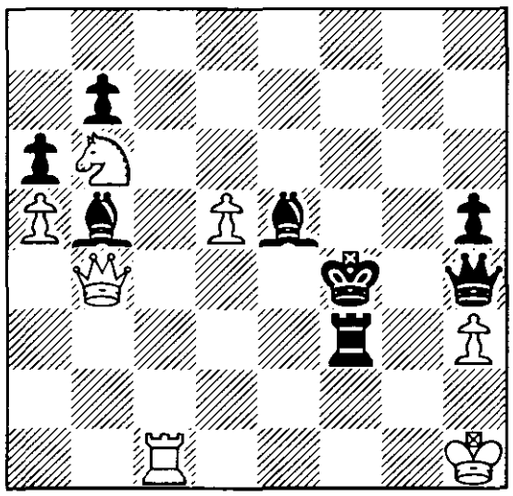


26 ♕d2

Neither 26 ♕a3 ♖g8 27 fxe5 ♖xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♖g8+ nor 26 ♘c4 ♖g8 27 fxe5 ♖xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♖g8+ 29 ♔f1 ♕e4! offers

any defence. After the game move Black is basically winning, although the position is complicated enough to give White hopes of a swindle.

26...♗f6 27 ♕c2 ♖be8 28 ♔h1 ♖g8 29 ♕xf5 ♗c3 30 ♖g1 ♖xe3 31 ♗f3!? ♖xf3 32 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 33 ♕g6+ ♔f8 34 ♕h6+ ♔f7 35 ♕h7+ ♔f6 36 ♕h6+ ♔f5 37 ♕e6+ ♔xf4 38 ♕xd6+ ♗e5 39 ♕b4+



39...♔g3

Avoiding the last trap: 39...♔g5 40 ♖g1+ ♖g3?? (40...♗g3 is somewhat better!) 41 ♕e7+ ♗f6 42 ♕e3+.

40 ♖g1+ ♔xh3 0-1

The king's march down the board finally comes to an end!

Game 50
Ruck-Vaulin
Paks 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 ♘f3 d6 6 g3 0-0 7 ♗g2 e6 8 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5 a6

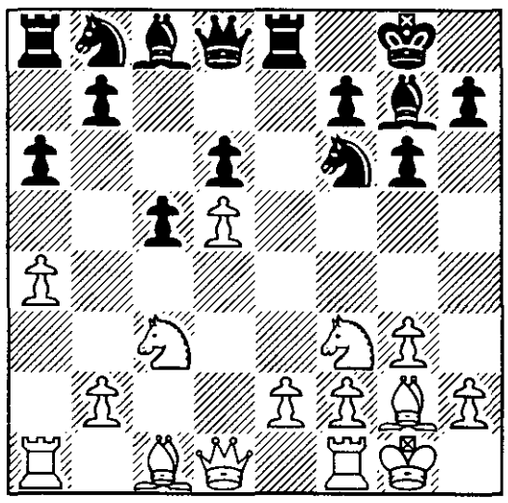
If Black intends to play ...♖e8 before ...♘bd7 then he should probably do so without inserting ...a7-a6. The reason for this is that after 9...♖e8 if White replies 10 ♗f4 then Black has many more options than in the main game:

a) 10...♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12 ♘d2 is very unclear after either 12...♖xf4 13 gxf4 ♗xb2 14 ♖b1 ♗g7 15 ♘f3 ♘d7, as in Dam-Norwood, Groningen 1988, or 12...♖b4!? 13 ♖b1 (13 a3 ♖xf4 14 gxf4 ♗xb2 15 ♖a2 ♗g7 is a slightly better version of the Dam-Norwood game for Black) 13...g5! 14 ♗e3 ♗f5 15 a3 ♖xb2 16 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 17 ♘e4 h6 18 ♕b3 ♗xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗d4, as in Kaidanov-Norwood, Florida 1993.

b) 10...♘a6!? (the most obvious way of taking advantage of the omission of ...a7-a6) 11 ♘d2 (11 ♖e1 ♘h5 12 ♗g5 ♕b6 13 ♕c1 ♗d7 14 ♖b1 c4 15 ♗h6 ♕c7 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 ♘d4 ♖ac8 18 ♕d2 ♘c5 19 h3 ♘f6 was a quick draw in Gofshtein-Psakhis, Israel 1997) 11...♘h5 12 ♗e3 ♘c7 13 a4 b6 and White's pieces were tripping over each other a little in Nikolic-Topalov, Monaco rapidplay 2000.

10 a4 ♖e8

We have already discussed 10...♘bd7 in the first three games of this chapter, while 10...♗g4 is careless as Black cannot arrange ...♕c8 and ...♗h3 due to 11 ♘d2! with ♘c4 to follow.



11 ♗f4!?

11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 transposes to Games 47 and 48, but here this development of the bishop is quite irritating as Black is nowhere near getting his queenside pieces out.

If instead 11 h3 then Black should probably defer 11...♘e4 for the time being and transpose to the note to White's 11th

move in the previous game with 11...♘bd7.

11...♘e4

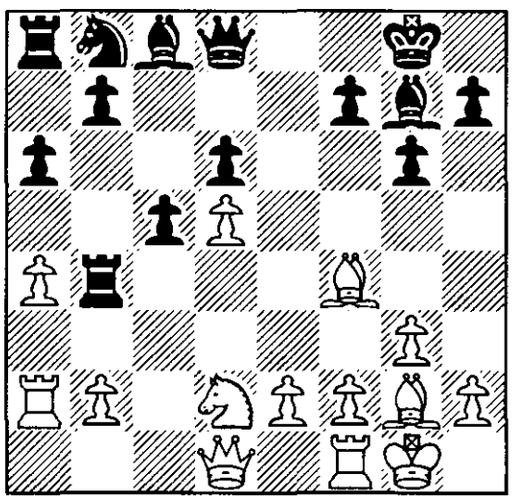
Although this has been played on countless occasions, I feel that it is too risky as Black has not even begun to develop his queenside yet. It may well be that Black has nothing better than 11...♕c7 12 ♖c1 ♘bd7 or 11...♘h5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7 12 ♖c1 ♘bd7 transposing to note 'b' to Black's 11th move in the previous main game, since 11...h6 12 ♕c1! g5 13 ♗d2 ♘bd7 14 h4 g4 15 ♘e1 ♔h7 16 ♘c2 ♘e5 17 ♘e3, as in Nikolic-Kindermann, European Team Championship 1983, is not satisfactory.

12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♘d2 ♖b4

It is too late to retreat to e8 as then 14 ♘c4 is strong.

14 ♖a2

14 e4 ♗xb2 (Psakhis) seems okay, but 14 ♘e4 h6 (or 14...f5 15 ♘c3 ♖xb2 16 ♖a3 ♕e7 17 ♖e1, as in Mitov-Ponomarenko, correspondence 1984) 15 ♗d2!? ♖xb2 16 ♕c1 ♖xd2 17 ♕xd2 f5 18 ♘c3 ♕a5 19 ♖ac1 was also quite dangerous for Black in Savon-Tal, USSR 1970.



14...g5

A couple of other defensive ideas have been tried for Black here:

a) Black has some problems on the long diagonal after 14...♗xb2 15 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 16 ♘e4 with the idea of ♕a1 (Sosonko), but in fact 15 ♕c2 ♗g7 16 ♘c4, as in Rechlis-Plaskett, Netanya 1987, is more straightforward, e.g. 16...♕f6 17 ♘xd6 ♖xf4 18 ♘xc8 ♘d7 19 ♘e7+ ♕xe7 20 gxf4 with a big advantage.

b) 14...♕e7 15 b3 and now:

b1) Black was always going to miss his dark-squared bishop on the kingside after 15...g5?! 16 ♗e3 ♗d4 17 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 18 e3 ♖b4 19 ♘c4 ♘d7 20 f4 in Nikolic-Hracek, European Team Championship, Batumi 1999.

b2) 15...♗e5! 16 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♘c4 ♕e7 18 e4 ♘d7 19 f4 ♘b6! 20 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 21 ♖e1 f6, as in Gleizerov-V.Gurevich, Uzhgorod 1988, and now 22 ♖c2-c4 is probably only a little better for White.

15 ♗e3 f5

White had excellent play for the pawn after 15...♖xb2 16 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 17 ♘c4 in Kutsyk-Kostjukov, Alushta 1998, while after 15...♗f5 16 ♕c1 b5 17 axb5 ♖xb5 18 ♘c4 h6 19 h4! Black's kingside was very exposed in Budnikov-Armas, Belfort open 1992.

16 ♘f3 h6

After 16...f4 17 ♗d2 Black's rook was embarrassed in Sosonko-Wockenfuss, Bad Lauterberg 1977, since 17...♖xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 19 gxf4 g4 20 ♘g5 leaves Black way behind in development and with an exposed king.

17 ♕c1!

17 b3 ♘d7 is much less effective.

17...♕f6 18 h4! g4

The earlier game Sosonko-Hulak, Surakarta 1982, had varied with 18...gxh4 (the endgame 18...f4 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♗d2 ♖xb2 21 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 22 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 23 gxf4 is much better for White - Sosonko) 19 ♘xh4 b5 20 axb5 ♖xb5 21 ♗h3, when White had a good grip on the position and went on to win.

19 ♘d2 ♘d7

The immediate 19...b5 leads to great complications which are possibly in

Black's favour after 20 ♗xc5?! dxc5 21 ♕xc5 ♕f8 22 d6 ♖d4 23 ♗xa8 ♖xd2 24 ♗d5+ ♔h8 25 axb5 ♘d7. However, 20 axb5! ♖xb5 21 ♘c4 ♘d7 22 ♗f4 would simply transpose to the game.

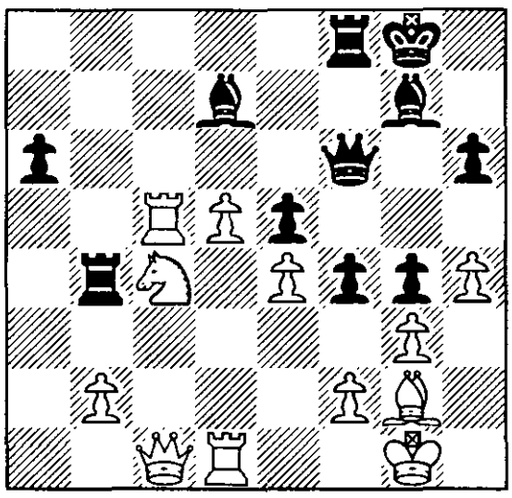
20 ♘c4 b5 21 axb5 ♖xb5 22 ♗f4 ♘e5 23 ♗xe5 dxe5 24 e4

24 ♖d1 allows 24...e4, blocking out the bishop.

24...f4 25 ♖d1

The endgame after 25 gxf4 ♕xf4 (25...gxf4 26 e5 ♕xh4 27 ♕xf4 ♖b4 28 ♖a5 looks very good for White) 26 ♘d6 ♕xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♖b6 28 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♗f1 should be very pleasant for White.

25...♖b4 26 ♖a5 ♗d7 27 ♖xc5 ♖f8



Black has suddenly established a dangerous-looking attack.

28 ♕d2 ♖b3 29 ♕e1

29 ♘a5? fails to 29...fxg3! 30 ♘xb3 gxf2+ 31 ♔f1 ♕xh4, when White's king is being stripped of cover.

29...♗b5 30 d6 ♗xc4 31 ♖xc4 ♖xb2 32 ♖d2 ♖xd2 33 ♕xd2 fxg3?!

This looks inaccurate. After 33...♖d8 34 ♕d5+ ♔h7 35 d7 ♕b6! Black has good counterplay due to 36 gxf4 g3!

34 fxg3 ♕e6

Now after 34...♖d8 35 ♕d5+ ♔h7 36 d7 ♕b6+ 37 ♔h2 and White's king is safe.

35 ♖c6 ♖d8 36 ♖xa6

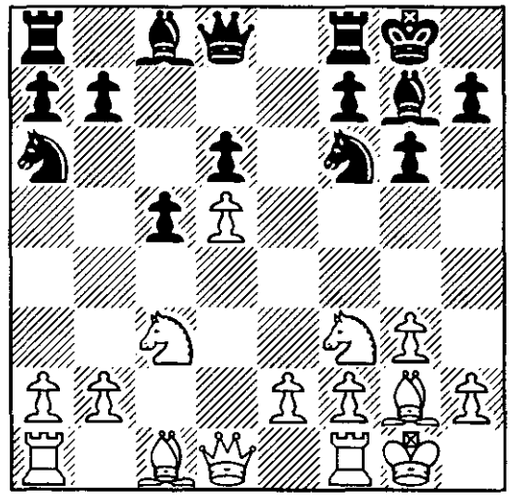
After this move the game quickly peters out to a draw. Instead 36 ♗f1! ♔h8 37 ♗c4 ♕f6 38 ♖xa6 ♕f3 39 ♕g2 would have kept White's winning chances alive.

36...♗f8 37 ♗f1 ♖xd6 38 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 39 ♕xd6 ½-½

Game 51
Borges Mateos-Vera
Matanzas 1992

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘a6

9...♗g4 does not solve Black's problems after 10 ♘d2 ♕d7 11 f3!? ♗h3 12 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 13 ♘c4 ♖d8 14 ♕b3 ♕d7 15 ♗f4 ♘e8 16 ♘b5 ♘a6 and now *Informator* 71's suggestion of 17 a3 was probably the simplest way for White to preserve a small advantage in Blees-Kasimdzhanov, Wijk aan Zee 1998.



10 ♘d2

This is played almost as a matter of routine nowadays, but White has a choice of plausible alternatives:

a) After 10 e4 the simplest is probably 10...♖e8 11 ♖e1 (or 11 ♘d2 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♖e1 ♘g4! with a good game in Moskalenko-Ehlvest, Helsinki open 1992) 11...♗g4 with a level game in Hausner-Razuvaev, German Bundesliga 1990/91.

b) 10 ♗f4 ♘c7 11 a4 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♘h5 13 ♗e3 b6 14 ♘c4 ♗a6 15 ♕b3 ♕d7 16 ♗f3 ♘f6 17 ♗f4 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 a6 and

Black managed to get his queenside counterplay going with ...b6-b5 in Moiseev-Shamkovich, USSR 1970.

c) 10 h3 (White's most promising alternative to 10 ♘d2) and now:

c1) 10...♘c7 11 e4 ♘d7 (unfortunately 11...b5 is well met by 12 e5!) 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 f6 (an ugly move to have to play, but otherwise e4-e5 was coming) 14 a4 with a space advantage for White in Razuvaev-Romero, Palma de Mallorca 1991.

c2) 10...♖e8 11 ♘d2 (after 11 ♖e1 Black can equalise with 11...♗d7! 12 a4 ♘e4, as in Razuvaev-Lautier, Sochi 1989) 11...♘c7 12 a4 (the careless 12 ♘c4?! allows 12...b5! 13 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♗f4 ♕b6! 15 d6 ♘e6 16 ♗xa8 ♘xf4 17 gxf4 ♗xh3, when Black was already slightly better in Kaidanov-Foisor, Moscow 1987) 12...b6 13 ♖e1 ♗a6 (or 13...♕e7 14 ♘c4 ♗a6 15 ♘a3 with a slightly more comfortable game for White in I.Ivanov-Emms, Gausdal 1993) 14 e4 ♘d7 15 ♘f3 ♕e7 16 ♗f4 ♕f8 17 ♕c2 and Black was very cramped in Kamsky-Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1996.

10...♘c7

10...♖b8?! is inaccurate, since after 11 a4 ♘c7 12 ♘c4 Black is not ready to counter with ...♗a6, e.g. 12...b6 13 ♘b5!? and Black probably wishes that his rook were still on a8.

11 a4

The immediate 11 ♘c4 is the subject of the next main game.

11...b6

Black must make preparations to remove the white knight when it comes to c4, e.g. 11...♖e8?! 12 ♘c4 with ♗f4 to follow.

12 ♘c4

This may be inaccurate now. White has several alternatives here:

a) After 12 ♖e1 ♗a6 13 ♖a3?! ♖e8 14 e4 ♘d7 15 ♗f1 ♗xf1 16 ♘xf1 a6 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 Black's queenside was ready to roll in Foguelman-Pachman, Buenos Aires 1960.

b) 12 h3 transposes to variation 'c2' above if Black plays 12...♗a6 13 ♖e1 ♖e8, but 13...♘d7! with the idea of ...f7-f5 is a clear improvement, e.g. 14 ♘de4 ♕e7 15 f4 c4 16 ♔h2 ♖ab8 17 ♖a2 ♗b7 with a promising game for Black in Temirbaev-Kotsur, Alma Ata 1995.

c) 12 ♖b1!? ♖e8 and now:

c1) 13 ♖e1 ♗a6 14 h3 (14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♘d7 is fine for Black) 14...♕e7 15 ♕c2 and now Co.Ionescu recommends 15...♗b7!, which prevents 16 e4 due to 16...♘cxd5.

c2) 13 b4 cxb4 14 ♖xb4 ♘a6 15 ♖b1 and here a draw was agreed in J.Horvath-Tolnai, Debrecen 1988, although I prefer Black after 15...♘c5.

12...♗a6 13 ♕b3

After 13 ♘a3 ♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 15 ♗d2 f5 Black was well placed in the centre in Vukic-Matulovic, Kraljevo 1967.

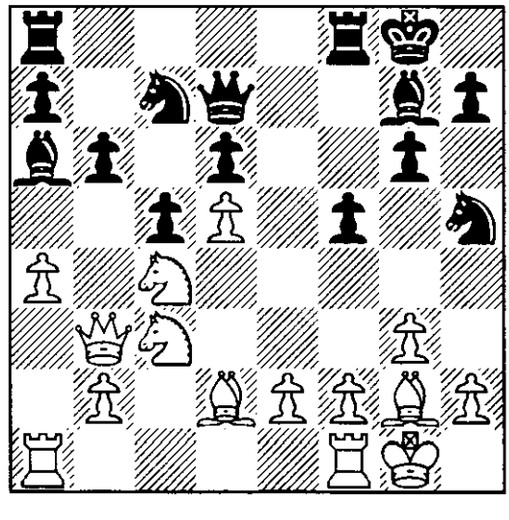
13...♕d7

13...♗xc4?! 14 ♕xc4 a6 allows White the opportunity to switch play to the kingside with 15 ♕h4!?, e.g. 15...♘d7 16 ♗g5 f6 17 ♗h6 f5 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 e4 with a very pleasant endgame for White in Cichocki-Tunik, Karwina open 1993.

14 ♗f4?!

14 ♖e1 would have kept the balance.

14...♘h5 15 ♗d2 f5



Black has achieved a promising attacking position on the kingside.

16 e4?

The immediate 16 ♗f3 was much safer.

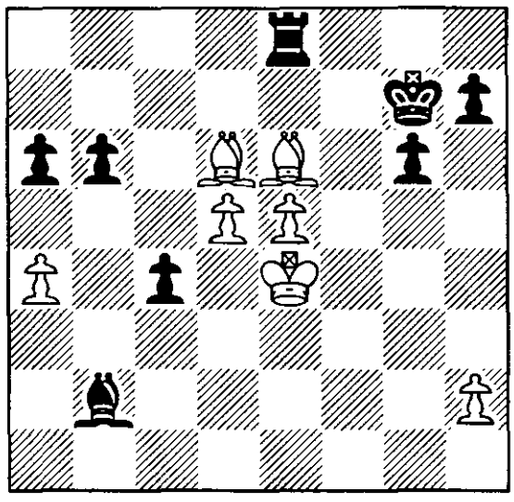
16...f4 17 ♗f3 fxg3 18 fxg3 ♕h3! 19 ♗e3?!

This is horrible, but Black has a strong attack after 19 ♗g2 ♗d4+ 20 ♘e3 (not 20 ♔h1?? ♘xg3 mate) 20...♕g4, while after 19 ♘e2 ♗xc4 20 ♕xc4 ♗xb2 21 ♖ab1 ♗e5 22 ♗g2 ♖xf1+ 23 ♖xf1, as in Pizarro-Bonaveri, San Jorge 1993, White would have been struggling to prove compensation for the pawn after 23...♕d7.

19...♘xg3 20 ♗g2 ♘e2+ 21 ♘xe2 ♗xc4 22 ♗xh3 ♗xb3 23 ♘f4 ♖ae8

23...♗c2! 24 ♘e6 ♘xe6 25 dxe6 ♖xf1+ 26 ♖xf1 ♗xe4 27 e7 ♗f5 28 ♗xf5 gxf5 29 ♖xf5 ♖e8 30 ♗g5 ♗xb2 was simpler according to Vera.

24 ♘e6 ♘xe6 25 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♗f4 ♗c4 27 ♗xd6 ♗d4+ 28 ♔g2 ♗xf1+ 29 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 30 ♔xf1 ♗xb2 31 ♔e2 ♔g7 32 e5 c4 33 ♔e3 a6 34 ♔e4



34...b5

This complicates the win by leaving only opposite-coloured bishops. Instead 34...♖xe6! 35 dxe6 c3 36 ♔d3 g5 37 ♗e7 g4 would have left White powerless to stop the pawns on both sides of the board.

35 ♗d7 ♗xe5 36 ♗xe8 ♗xd6 37 axb5 a5 38 b6?

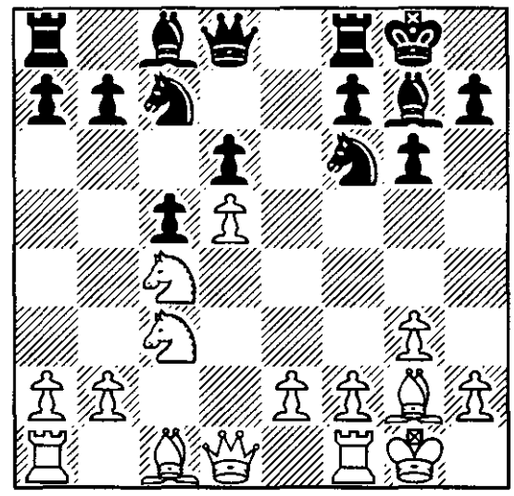
The losing move. After 38 ♔d4! ♗xh2 39 ♔xc4 ♗g1 40 d6 (Vera) the win is still far from easy.

38...♗xh2 39 ♔d4 ♗g1+ 40 ♔xc4 ♗xb6 0-1

Game 52
Mikhalevski-Solozhenkin
European Club Cup 1999

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 0-0 ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 ♘c4

This is much more direct and currently enjoys greater popularity than 11 a4.



11...♘fe8

This is Black's most solid move, though he has also tried:

a) 11...b5? (or 11...b6? 12 ♘xd6!) is a well-known blunder. After 12 ♘xd6! ♕xd6 13 ♗f4 ♕b6 (13...♕d7! 14 d6 ♘e6 15 ♗xa8 ♘xf4 16 gxf4 ♕g4+ 17 ♗g2 ♕xf4 makes the best of a bad job, but White is still better) 14 d6 ♘e6 (or 14...♖d8? 15 dxc7 ♖xd1 16 ♖axd1 ♗b7 17 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 18 ♖d8+ ♘e8 19 ♖b8 ♕c6 20 ♘xb5 ♗f8 21 ♘xa7 ♕xc7 22 ♗xc7 ♖xa7 23 ♗b6 1-0 Atalik-Kreiman, Los Angeles 1998) 15 ♗xa8 ♘xf4 16 gxf4 ♖d8 17 ♗g2 Black did not really have enough for the exchange in Verat-Haik, Monaco 1999.

b) 11...♕e7!? 12 ♗f4 ♖d8 looks slightly clumsy. After 13 e4 b6 14 a4 ♘g4 15 ♘b5 ♘xb5 16 axb5 ♘e5 Black was quite active

in Cozianu-Istratescu, Baile Herculane 1999, so perhaps White should consider 15 ♕b3 and if 15...♘e5 then 16 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 f4.

c) 11...♘h5 12 a4 and now:

c1) 12...f5 13 ♗f3 ♘f6 (13...f4 14 ♘e4! fxg3 15 hxg3 ♗h3 16 ♖e1 ♘e8 17 ♘g5 left Black with a horrible hole on e6 in Sosonko-Blees, Dutch Team Championship 1993) 14 ♗f4 ♘fe8 15 ♕d2 b6 16 ♖ac1 ♗b7 17 ♖fe1 and Black had lost too much time with his king's knight in Ilincic-Kovacevic, Novi Becej 1996.

c2) 12...b6 13 e4 ♗a6 14 ♕d3 (preparing to cement the c4-knight with b2-b3) 14...♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 a6 16 ♗e3 ♕d7 17 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 18 ♕f1! and White was very slightly better in Ilincic-Velimirovic, Podgorica 1996.

12 ♗f4!?

This sharp move has been popularised in recent years by Mikhalevski. Previously 12 a4 b6 was almost invariably played and now:

a) 13 ♕b3 ♗a6 14 ♘b5?! ♕d7 15 ♗f4 ♘xb5 16 axb5 ♕xb5 17 ♕xb5 ♗xb5 18 ♘xd6 ♗xe2 was already tremendous for Black in Youngworth-Shamkovich, Lone Pine 1978.

b) 13 ♗d2 (preparing to meet 13...♗a6 by 14 b3) 13...♕d7 14 ♕c1 and now instead of 14...♗a6 15 b3, as in Kuligowski-Shamkovich, New York 1981, perhaps 14...♖b8 with the option of ...b6-b5 at some point.

c) 13 ♕d2!? (also with the idea of 13....♗a6 14 b3) 13...♖b8 14 ♖b1 ♗a6 15 b3 b5? 16 ♘a5 ♕d7 17 ♘c6 was too ambitious for Black in Sosonko-Lautier, European Club Cup 1991, but *ECO*'s recommendation of 15...♕d7 16 ♗b2 f5 is pretty solid.

d) 13 ♕c2 ♗a6 14 b3 ♖b8 15 ♗b2 ♕d7 16 e3 and now 16...f5 would have offered more or less equal chances in Moskalenko-Moldovan, Hollabrunn 1998.

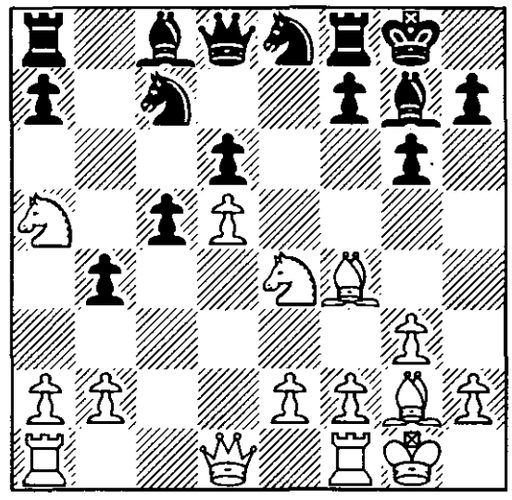
12...b5

It seems logical to try and exploit White's omission of a2-a4 in this fashion. Instead 12...f5 (12...g5 13 ♗d2 f5 14 a4 transposes to variation 'a', so White should consider 14 f4!? - Blees) and now:

a) 13 a4 g5!? 14 ♗d2 b6 15 ♕c1 h6 16 e4 ♗a6 17 b3 f4 18 gxf4 gxf4 and Black held a kingside initiative in Cosma-Suba, Romanian Team Championship 1992.

b) 13 ♕d2 b5 (13...b6 14 ♖ac1 ♗b7 15 a3 ♕d7 was slightly passive for Black in Pogorelov-Suba, Collado Villalba 2000) 14 ♘a5 b4 15 ♘a4 ♘b5 16 ♘c6 ♕d7 17 ♖ac1 ♘f6 and now in Mikhalevski-Sakaev, Beersheva 1998, 18 ♕d3! was promising according to Mikhalevski.

13 ♘a5 b4 14 ♘e4



I believe that I may actually have been the first player to try this gambit continuation, way back in 1985!

14...♘b5

The 'inaugural' game in this line went 14...♗a6 15 ♘c6 ♕d7 16 ♕d2 ♗b5 17 a4 bxa3 18 ♖xa3 ♗c4 (18...♘xd5 19 ♘xc5 dxc5 20 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 21 ♗xd5 also favours White) 19 ♘c3 a6?? (the losing move; although after 19...♘b5 White is still better) 20 ♘a4 ♘b5 21 ♖e3 ♕b7 22 b3 ♘a3 23 ♕a2 1-0 Kinsman-Schulte, London Lloyds Bank Masters 1985.

The critical test of White's idea is 14...♗xb2 15 ♘c6 ♕d7 and now:

a) 16 ♖b1 ♗g7 17 ♘xc5 dxc5 18 d6 ♘e6 19 ♘e7+ ♔h8 20 ♗c6 (Shamkovich suggests 20 ♗xa8 ♘xf4 21 ♘xc8, but then 21...♘h3+ followed by ...♘f6! looks good for Black) 20...♕d8 21 ♗xa8 ♘xf4 22 gxf4 ♗h3 23 ♗g2 ♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♘xd6 25 ♘c6 ♕f6 and although White eventually managed to draw in Albert-D.Gurevich, New York 1986, I prefer Black's position here.

b) 16 ♘xc5!? (mentioned without analysis by Shamkovich) 16...dxc5 17 d6 ♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 ♘xd6 (or 18...f6 19 dxc7 ♘xc7 20 ♖d1 with compensation for the sacrificed material) 19 ♕f6 ♖e8! with a very messy position. However, I would be worried about 17...g5!?, e.g. 18 dxc7 ♗xa1 19 ♕xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♘e7+ ♔g7 and Black is on top.

15 ♘c6 ♕d7 16 a3!?

After 16 ♕d2 Black should probably prefer 16...♗b7 to 16...♘f6 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 and now 18 e4-e5 would have been quite promising for White in Kinsman-Ward, National Club Championship 1985.

16...bxa3 17 bxa3 ♘f6

After 17...♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 White has excellent attacking prospects down the long diagonal.

18 a4!?

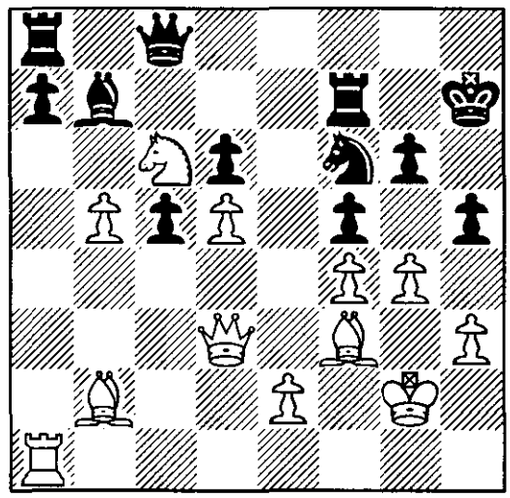
Mikhalevski also suggests 18 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19 a4! ♗xa1 20 ♕xa1 ♘d4 21 ♘xd4 cxd4 22 ♕xd4 with good compensation.

18...♘xe4 19 axb5 ♖e8 20 ♕d3 ♗xa1 21 ♖xa1 f5 22 f3 ♘f6 23 ♗c1 ♗b7 24 ♗b2 ♖f8 25 f4 h5 26 h3 ♔h7 27 ♗f3 ♖f7 28 ♔g2 ♕c8

White must find a way to blast open the kingside to exploit the dark-squared bishop's complete domination of the long diagonal. The question is, how?

29 g4?!

29 ♖h1 a6 30 b6 was more precise (Mikhalevski).



29...a6?

Black had to take up the gauntlet with 29...fxg4 30 hxg4 ♘xg4 (not 30...hxg4 31 ♗e4! ♘xe4 32 ♖h1+ ♔g8 33 ♖h8 mate) with great complications.

30 gxh5 ♘xh5?

Black needed this knight for defensive purposes, thus 30...gxh5 31 b6 was preferable.

31 ♗xh5 gxh5 32 ♕f3 ♔h6 33 ♔h2?

This leaves the e-pawn vulnerable. White really is coming down the g-file after 33 ♔f2! ♕e8 34 ♖g1 ♗xc6 35 dxc6.

33...axb5?

33...♕e8 34 ♖g1 ♗xc6 35 dxc6 ♖e7 36 ♖g2 was Black's last real hope.

34 ♖g1 ♕g8

34...♖c7 was necessary, when 35 ♖g5 ♕e8 36 ♖xf5 (threatening ♖f6+ and ♕d3+) 36...c4 (or 36...♖a4 37 ♘d8) 37 ♖f6+ ♔h7 38 ♖e6 is winning for White.

35 ♖g5! ♕xg5 36 fxg5+ ♔xg5 37 ♕g3+ ♔h6 38 ♕xd6+

Both 38 ♘e7 ♖g8 (or 38...♖xe7 39 ♕xd6+ ♔g5 40 ♕xe7+ ♔f4 41 ♗c1 mate) 39 ♘xg8+ ♔h7 40 ♘f6+ ♔h6 41 ♗c1+ f4 42 ♗xf4 and the prosaic 38 h4!? ♔h7 39 ♕g5 ♖d7 40 ♘e7 ♖xe7 41 ♕xe7+ ♔g6 42 ♕g7 would have been mate.

38...♔h7 39 ♘d8 1-0

Summary
In the main line with 9...a6 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♘d2 ♖e8 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 both 13...♘e5 (Game 47) and 13...♘b6 (Game 48) offer good counter chances. Recently attention has switched to 11 ♗f4, but this too should be okay for Black (Game 49). If Black tries the alternative plan with 9...♘a6 he seems to be fine if White plays slowly with 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 a4 (Game 51), and while 11 ♘c4 (Game 52) is more testing, it is not clear that the complications are at all bad for Black.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 *(D)*

9...a6

9...♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 *(D)*

11 a4 – *Game 51*

11 ♘c4 – *Game 52*

10 a4 ♘bd7

10...♖e8 11 ♗f4 – *Game 50*

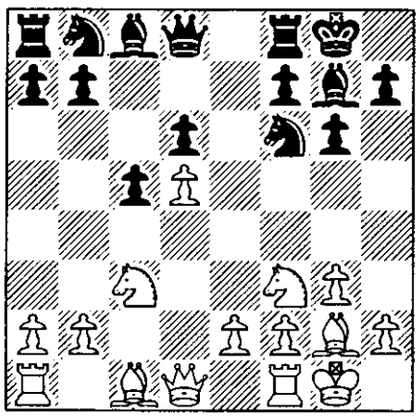
11 ♘d2

11 ♗f4 – *Game 49*

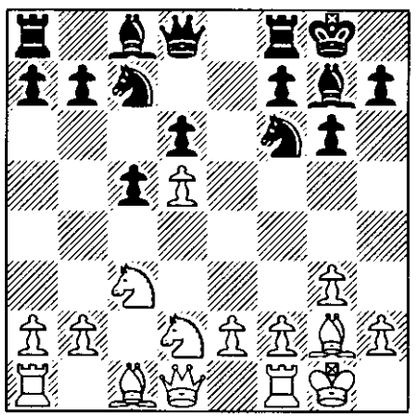
11...♖e8 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 *(D)* **♘e5**

13...♘b6 – *Game 48*

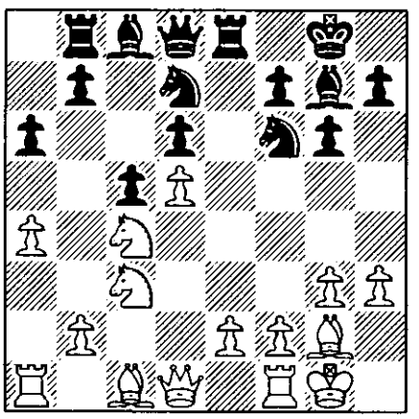
14 ♘a3 – *Game 47*



9 0-0

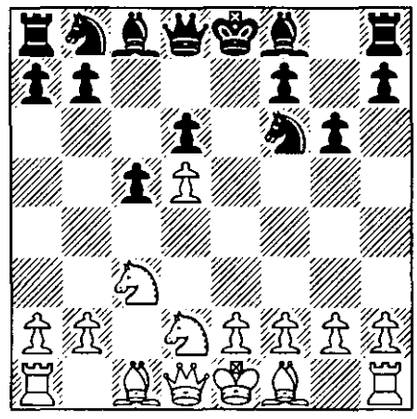


10...♘c7



13 ♘c4

CHAPTER NINE



White plays 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2

With 7 ♘d2 White immediately declares his intention to swing the king's knight to the ideal c4-square, from where it will bear down on the e5-square and d6-pawn. This move order can be used to either play an immediate ♘c4 or to transpose to a type of classical main line with an early e2-e4, but having eliminated any ideas of a pin on the knight with ...♗g4. Basically there are two main paths after 7...♗g7: the 'knight's tour' variation with 8 ♘c4 (Games 53 and 54) and the hybrid classical main line with 8 e4 (Games 55-57).

Game 53
Däubler-Kindermann
Bad Wörishofen open 1989

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♘d2

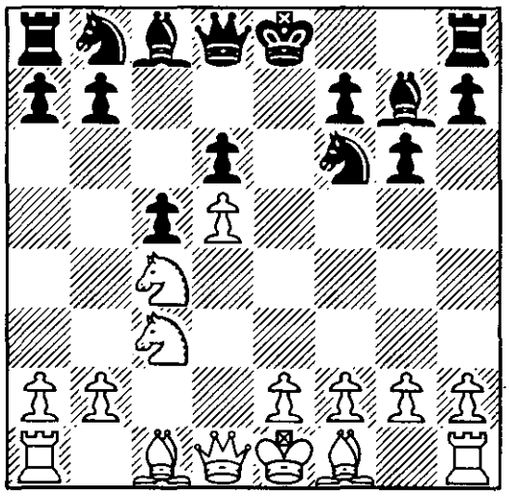
The knight rushes to take up a position on the ideal c4-square, exerting pressure on the e5-square and d6-pawn. However, whether White should really be moving the same piece *three* times in the first eight moves is a moot point.

Many White players elect to play a move order with 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 (or 7 e4 and if 7...♗g7 then 8 ♘d2) as a means of side-stepping the ...♗g4 lines of Chapter 3. This idea is the subject of Games 55-57.

7...♗g7

The cautious 7...♘bd7 is also possible here, ready to meet 8 ♘c4 with 8...♘b6. The only real drawback to this idea is that after 8 e4(!) White has transposed to the old main lines of Chapter 3, having avoided Black's most popular idea of an early ...♗g4. In any case 7...♘bd7 is not particularly dynamic and there is no reason for Black to avoid taking up the gauntlet with 7...♗g7.

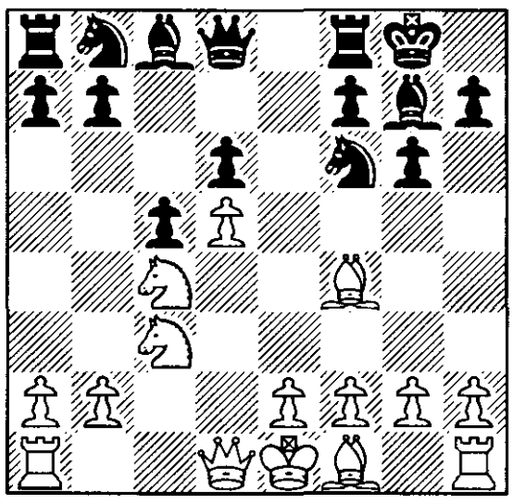
8 ♘c4



8...0-0 9 ♗f4

The alternative 9 ♗g5, hoping to provoke a weakness on the kingside with 9...h6, is roughly equally popular. However, this too is nothing for Black to be afraid of, as we shall see in the next main game.

During the mid 1990s a kind of fianchetto-hybrid variation with 9 g3 enjoyed a brief spell of popularity. Inspired by the example of Alexander Baburin, both Matthew Sadler and Vasilly Ivanchuk had a little dabble with it. However, after 9...b6 10 a4 ♘e8!? (to defend the d-pawn so that Black can play ...♘d7 and then ...♘e5 if necessary; the immediate 10...♗a6 is met by 11 ♘b5) 11 ♗g2 ♘d7 12 0-0 ♗a6 13 ♘a3 f5 Black had no problems at all in Sadler-Ward, British Championship, Nottingham 1996.



9...♘a6!?

This dynamic response is totally in keeping with the ethos of the Modern Benoni. Over the years 9...♘e8 has been played far more often, but if Black can get away with the omission of this move then he must be doing well. After 9...♘e8 10 ♕d2! Black has a difficult choice between:

a) 10...b6 is rather routine, since after Ciocaltea's 11 e3 ♗a6 12 a4 ♗xc4 13 ♗xc4 a6 14 0-0 ♘d7 15 ♕e2 f5 16 ♗g3 ♕c8 17 ♖fc1 ♘e5 18 ♖ab1 ♘c7 19 b4 Black is very passive.

b) 10...♗xc3!? 11 bxc3 b5 has been tried by both Tal and Korchnoi. However, notwithstanding the fact that these great players played it, most Benoni exponents would be very reluctant to give up their dark-squared bishop so easily. After 12 ♘b2 ♗b7 13 g3 ♘d7 14 ♗g2 f5 15 0-0 it is hard to imagine that Black's weaknesses on the dark squares won't ultimately have some impact on the game.

We should also mention the pawn sacrifice 9...b6!? 10 ♗xd6 ♖e8, which should offer Black good counterplay after 11 ♗g3 ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 e3 b5 14 ♘d6 (14 ♘d2 ♖b4 15 b3!? may be more testing) 14...♖b4 15 ♗e2 (or 15 ♗xb5 ♗f8!) 15...♗xb2! 16 0-0 c4 according to Psakhis.

10 ♕d2?!

This natural move may not be best here. White has a couple of alternatives

a) 10 ♗xd6 ♖e8 11 e3 (or 11 ♗g3 ♘b4!? - Psakhis) 11...♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♗g3 b5 is clearly much more favourable for Black than the 9...b6 line above as Black has gained a whole tempo. Instead of making two moves with his b-pawn he has used one of them for the very useful ...♘a6. Even so, the position is still rather murky.

b) 10 e3 virtually forces Black to retreat with 10...♘e8, though in slightly better circumstances than the immediate 9...♘e8 as White has committed his pawn to e3. White cannot grab the d-pawn with 11 ♘e4? b5 12 ♘cxd6 ♘xd6 13 ♘xd6 ♗xb2 or 11 ♘b5? ♗d7 12 ♘bxd6 b5 13 ♘xe8 ♗xe8 14 ♘e5 ♘b4 and must revert to 11 ♕d2, when after 11...f5 Black already has designs on playing ...g6-g5. White has two alternatives here:

b1) 12 h4 ♘ac7 13 a4 b6 14 ♗e2 ♗a6 15 ♗g5 ♕d7 16 0-0 ♘f6 17 ♕c2 ♗xc4 18 ♗xc4 a6 19 ♗e2 b5 20 ♗f3 ♖fb8 and Black held all the trumps in Nascimento-Renet, Lucerne 1985.

b2) 12 ♘b5!? g5 13 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 14

♘cxd6 f4 15 ♘xc8 fxe3 16 fxe3 ♕xc8 17 0-0-0 c4!, when Black had good play for the pawn in A.Petrosian-Ermenkov, Riga 1981, according to Psakhis.

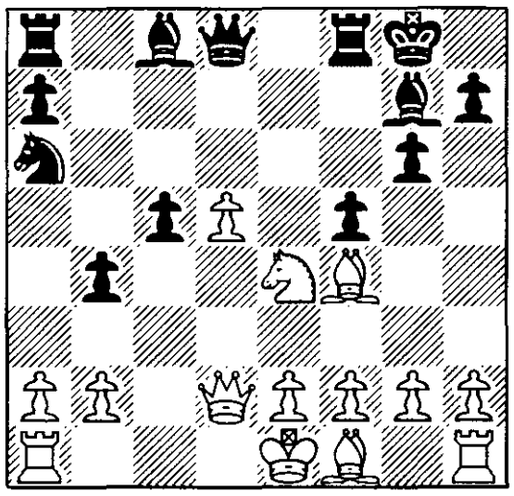
10...b5! 11 ♘xd6

11 ♘xb5 allows 11...♘e4.

11...b4 12 ♘ce4?!

12 ♘d1 looks pretty ugly, but it may be safer than the game move. After 12...♘h5 13 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 14 e3 c4 15 ♖c1 ♘xf4 Black already held a tremendous initiative in Kholmogordva-Sadvakasov, Perm 1997, so perhaps White should take the bull by the horns with 13 e4.

12...♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 f5



Black seizes the initiative with forcing moves. Now 14 ♘d6 is well met by 14...g5!, while both 14 ♘g5 and 14 ♘g3 run into 14...c4-c3.

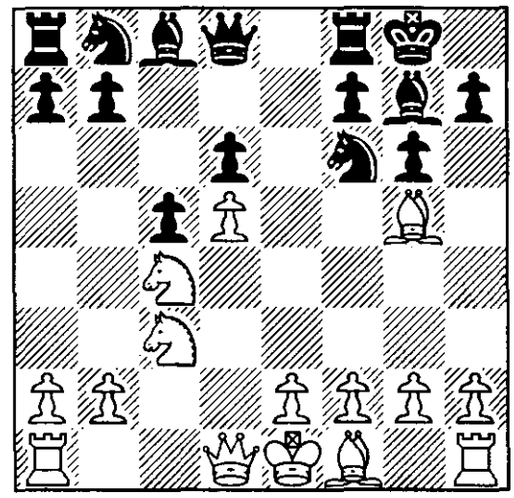
14 ♗g5 ♕b6 15 ♘g3 c4 16 ♖c1?

White's position is pretty horrible, but at least 16 ♕c2 (to meet 16...c3 with 17 b3) would have offered some resistance. The game move is tantamount to resignation.

16...c3 17 bxc3 ♗xc3 18 ♖xc3 bxc3 19 ♕xc3 f4 20 ♗h6 ♕b1+ 21 ♔d2 ♖f7 22 ♕c6 ♗b7 0-1

Game 54
Dlugy-Klinger
World Junior Ch., Sharjah 1985

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♗g5



9...♕e7

Although 9 ♗g5 is designed to encourage 9...h6, there is hardly anything wrong with this move. After 10 ♗f4 we reach the positions of the previous game with ...h7-h6 flicked in, which does not really change things much, while after 10 ♗h4 Kapengut's 10...b6 11 e3 ♗a6 12 a4 ♕e7 seems like a straightforward way to equalise. Likewise, the immediate 9...b6 10 a4 ♗a6 11 ♘b5 ♗xb5 12 axb5 ♘bd7!? 13 ♘xd6 h6 14 ♗h4 ♘e5 15 ♘e4 g5 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 ♗f3 ♘c4 (Kapengut) offers good play for the pawn. The game move prepares for ...♘bd7-e5.

10 e3

A sharper course of action is 10 ♕d2, when 10...♘bd7?! is quite well met by 11 ♕f4! and Black must therefore switch to 10...b6, e.g. 11 ♕f4 and now:

a) 11...♖d8 12 f3 (12 ♘e4? allows Black to generate a tremendous queenside initiative after 12...♕xe4 13 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xd8 b5, while 12 0-0-0 ♗a6 13 e4 ♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 ♕h4 ♘bd7 16 ♖he1 ♕f8 was more than satisfactory for Black in Portisch-T.Horvath, Budapest 1984) 12...♗a6 13 e4 b5 14 ♘d2 b4 15 ♘d1 h6 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♕e3 ♗xf1 18 ♔xf1 ♘d7 and Black stood very well in Eliet-Kinsman, Toulouse 1996, although he

later went wrong and lost.

b) 11...♗a6!? (a dynamic pawn sacrifice) 12 ♘xd6 (I'm not entirely convinced that Black has quite enough for the pawn after 12 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♘xd6 ♖d8 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘de4 ♗g7 16 0-0-0) 12...h6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♘de4 ♗g7 15 e3 f5 16 ♘d2 g5 17 ♕a4 ♗xf1 18 ♖xf1 ♘d7 and Black's powerful dark-squared bishop provided good compensation for the pawn in Yewdokimov-Suba, Sitges open 1992.

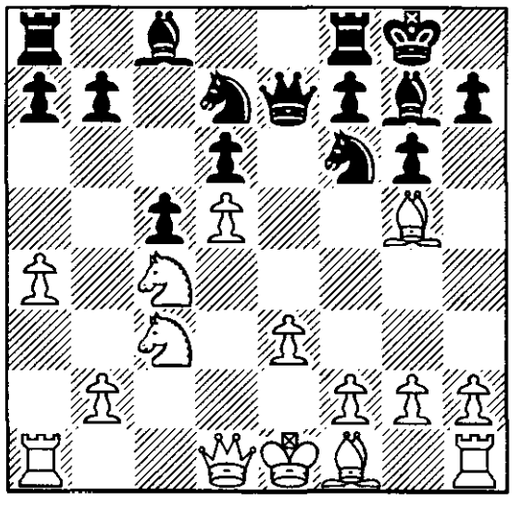
10...♘bd7

This natural follow-up to Black's last move was a new move at the time, although there is nothing much wrong with 10...b6 11 ♗e2 ♗a6 12 a4 h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♘e4 16 ♘xe4 ♕xe4, as in Yusupov-Christiansen, Mexico 1980, either.

11 a4

The greedy 11 ♘b5 a6 12 ♘bxd6 b5 13 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 looks very dodgy for White, while 11 ♗e2 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 ended in a quick draw in Gulko-Wahls, Groningen 1990: 13 ♗f4 ♕e7 14 0-0 ♗f5 15 ♖c1 a6 16 a4 ♖fb8 17 h3 ♗d7 18 ♖a1 ♘e8 19 ♗c4 ♘c7 20 ♕d3 ♖e8 21 ♖fe1 ♖ab8 22 a5 b5 23 axb6 ♖xb6 24 ♖a2 ♖eb8 25 b3 ♗b5 26 ♗xb5 ½-½.

The game move makes a retreat square for the knight on a3, but it is hardly likely to take a starring role there.



11...♘e5 12 ♘a3 h6 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♘fd7

Black is now ready to strike out with ...f7-f5 to take advantage of White's lagging development and the exposed position of the white bishop on g3.

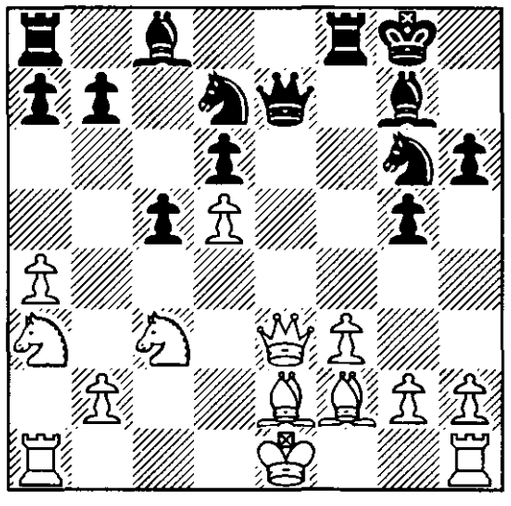
15 ♗e2

Not 15 h4? f5 16 hxg5 f4 17 gxh6 (after 17 ♗xf4 ♖xf4! White must give up a piece for three pawns, but it probably isn't enough) 17...fxg3 18 hxg7 gxf2+ followed by ...♕xg7 and Black is on top (Klinger).

15...f5 16 f3 ♘g6 17 ♕d2 f4 18 ♗f2 fxe3

Klinger suggests 18...♖e8 to meet 19 ♘c2? with 19...fxe3 20 ♗xe3 (or 20 ♕xe3 ♘f4) 20...♘h4, although after 19 e4 White can close the position with no ill effects.

19 ♕xe3



19...♖e8

It is quite tempting to keep the queens on with 19...♕f7!? with ideas of ...♖e8 and ...♘f4.

20 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♗g3 ♘f4

After Klinger's 21...♗e5 White can play 22 ♘c4 ♘f4 23 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 24 g3 ♗e5 25 ♖d1 with roughly equal chances. The game move leads to a very drawish endgame.

22 ♗xf4 gxf4 23 ♘c4 ♘b6 24 ♘xd6 ♗xc3+ 25 bxc3 ♘xd5 26 ♔f2 ♗e6

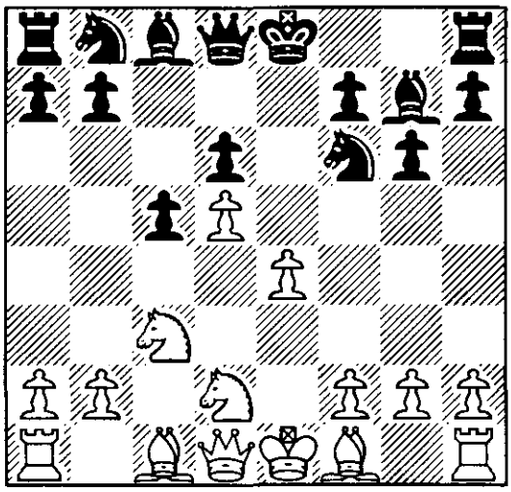
Not 26...♘xc3 27 ♗c4+ ♔f8 28 ♖hc1 ♖e3 29 g3! and the black position is overloaded (Dlugy).

27 ♘e4 ♔g7 28 c4 ♘e3 29 ♘xc5 ♗xc4 30 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 31 ♖he1 ♘e5 32 ♔f1 ♖ae8 33 a5 b6 34 ♘e4 ♘c4 35 axb6 axb6 36 ♔f2 ♖d8 37 ♖ec1 ♘d2 38 ♖a4 ♘xe4+ 39 fxe4 ♖d3 40 ♖b4 ♖e6 41 ♖cb1 ♖e3 42 ♖e1 ♖c3 43 e5 ♖e3 44 ♖xe3 ½-½

Game 55
Dlugy-Suba
New York open 1987

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4

A crafty move order which heads for the classical main line while avoiding the very popular 7 e4 a6 8 a4 ♗g4.



8...0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘a6 10 0-0 ♘c7

10...♘e8!? is seen in Game 57, while 10...♖e8 transposes to Chapter 3, Game 21.

11 a4

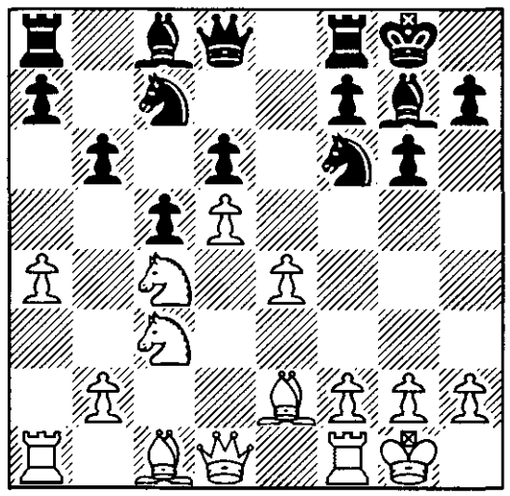
Although this move is not forced, White is likely to need it at some point so it might as well be here. After 11 f3 (to stop ...b7-b5) Black can play 11...♘d7 12 a4 b6.

11...b6

Black has a wide choice of alternatives here, as we shall see in the next main game.

12 ♘c4

This looks like White's most natural move, securing a strong outpost for the knight while freeing a route for the queen's bishop to enter the game. Just as on move 11 it is more logical for White to play moves that he is definitely going to need rather than those that *might* be useful such as 12 ♔h1, 12 f3 or 12 ♖e1, e.g. 12 ♖e1 ♔h8!? 13 ♖b1 ♘fe8 14 ♘c4 f5! 15 ♗f3 ♗a6 16 ♕b3 ♖b8 gave Black good play in G.Timoshenko-Suba, London Lloyds Bank Masters 1990.



12...♗a6

12...♖e8, which transposes to Game 21 in Chapter 3 after 13 f3 ♗a6, is also popular, but it is not really clear how useful this move is. Black has made preparations for ...♗a6 so he might as well play it now.

13 ♗g5

White has a very wide choice here:

a) After 13 ♖e1 ♖e8 14 ♗f1 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♘d7 16 ♖a3 a6 17 ♗f1 ♖b8 18 ♗f4 ♘e5 19 ♕d2 b5 20 axb5 axb5 Black had achieved his ideal queenside expansion in Hellsten-Ward, Copenhagen 1995.

b) 13 ♗d2 ♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 ♕e2 ♖e8 16 f3 ♘d7 17 ♖ab1 f5 18 b4 ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕f6 with dynamic equality in Khalifman-Wojtkiewicz, Tallinn 1993.

c) 13 ♖b1 ♕d7 14 ♗d2 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 b4 b5 17 ♗d3 c4 18 ♗c2 bxa4! (an original solution; these queenside blockade positions favour White if he is allowed to

consolidate) 19 ♘xa4 ♖ab8 20 ♘c3 ♘b5 and Black had equalised in Tukmakov-Foisor, New York open 1988.

d) 13 ♗f4!? and now:

d1) 13...♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 15 h3! (creating a key retreat square on h2 for the bishop in preparation for e4-e5) 15...♕e7?! 16 e5 ♘fe8 17 exd6 ♘xd6 18 ♖e1 ♕d7 19 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 20 ♘e4 was tremendous for White in Farago-Peptan, Ljubljana 1997.

d2) 13...♘h5! 14 ♗d2 (14 ♗xh5 ♗xc4 15 ♗e2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 f5 is more than satisfactory for Black) 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♗d4! 16 g3 f5 17 exf5 ♖xf5 18 ♔g2 (not 18 g4 ♘f4!) 18...♖f7 was perfectly okay for Black in Schumacher-Vaulin, Budapest 1991, but maybe he could also have tried 18...♕e7!? or 18...♕f6!? to bring the other rook over.

e) 13 f3 (solid and popular) 13...♖b8 (13...♖e8 makes less sense now that White has reinforced his e-pawn, while 13...♕d7 14 ♗g5 transposes to the note to White's 14th move below) 14 ♗d2 (14 ♗g5 is possible here too) 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♕e2 ♕c8 17 ♖ab1 ♘d7 18 f4 ♖e8 (I like the idea of 18...♕b7!? 19 e5 dxe5 20 d6 ♘e6 21 ♗a6 and now 21...♕c6 looks more ambitious than Psakhis's suggestion of 21...♘d4) 19 e5 dxe5 20 f5! b5! 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♘xb5 ♘xb5 23 ♗xb5 e4 24 ♗e3 ♗d4 25 ♗c6 ♖b4! (much better than 25...♖e7? 26 ♗xd4 cxd4 27 f6 ♖e5 28 ♕d2 ♘c5 29 ♕xd4 ♘d3 30 b4 ♕g4 31 d6 ♖d8 32 d7 h5 33 ♕b6 ♖xd7 34 ♕b8+ 1-0 Polugayevsky-Hulak, Moscow 1990) 26 ♔h1 ♖e5 and Black eventually emerged on top in the complications in Polugayevsky-Psakhis, Sochi 1988, although Polugayevsky must have had an improvement in mind during his game against Hulak.

13...♕d7

13...h6 looks tempting but it is rather falling in with White's plans. The game move both breaks the pin and prepares an eventual ...b7-b5.

14 b3

White gives himself the option of recapturing on c4 with the b-pawn, but this move weakens the long diagonal. The very solid 14 f3 should be slightly in White's favour after, for example 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♕d3, but 14 ♕d2 is less effective since 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 a6 16 ♕d3 can be met by 16...♘g4 and Black can therefore force through ...b6-b5.

14...♖fe8

In Lerner-M.Kopylov, Hamburg 1999, Black tried the enterprising 14...b5 15 axb5 ♘xb5 16 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 with a fairly reasonable game, although the a-file is a worry. Instead of 14...♖fe8 it may be better to move the other rook to e8 in this precise position, since in the lines that follow Black often plays ...f7-f5, e.g. 15 f3 ♘g4 16 ♕e1 ♘e5 (Suba).

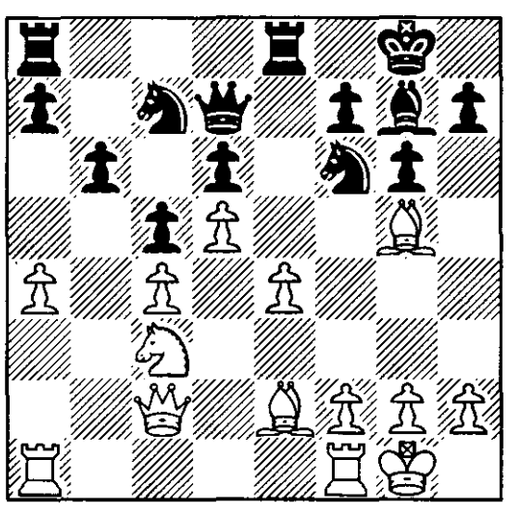
15 ♕c2

After 15 f3 ♘g4! 16 ♕e1 ♘e5 17 ♕d2 an equal position is reached.

15...♗xc4

An improvement over 15...♘g4 16 ♖ae1 ♗d4 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 18 h3! f5? 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘xe5 dxe5 21 exf5 gxf5 22 d6! with a strong initiative for White in Dlugy-Hulak, Montpellier 1985.

16 bxc4



Consistent with his 14th move, and preferable to 16 ♗xc4 a6 with an equal

position.

16...♘xe4!? 17 ♘xe4 ♕f5 18 ♗d3 ♗xa1 19 ♘xd6

After 19 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 Black's active pieces outweigh the queen.

19...♕xg5 20 ♘xe8 ♘xe8 21 ♖xa1 ♕e5

Unfortunately, Black's creativity has only been rewarded by a slightly worse position.

22 ♖c1 ♘d6 23 ♕c3 ♕xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖e8 25 ♖c1 ♔g7 26 f4 ♔f6 27 ♔f2 h6?!

27...♘e4+ may have been better, since these pawn moves on the kingside only allow White to establish a firm grip on that side of the board.

28 ♔f3 g5 29 ♖a1 gxf4 30 ♔xf4 ♘b7 31 g4 ♖g8 32 ♖e1 ♘d6 33 h4 ♘b7 34 ♖e3 ♘d6 35 ♗e2 ♘c8 36 ♖e5 ♖d8 37 ♗d3 ♖g8 38 ♖h5 ♔g7 39 g5 ♖e8 40 ♖xh6 ♖e1 41 d6 1-0

Game 56
Ftacnik-Rogers
Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 ♗e2 c5 7 d5 e6 8 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5 ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 a4 ♘fe8

This line is very closely related to 10...♘e8 (see the next main game). Black renounces ...b7-b5 and counters with ...f7-f5 instead. This idea is double-edged because on the one hand it hits at the white centre, but on the other it weakens the black kingside. The main saving grace is that the horrible e6-square is covered by both a knight and a bishop for the time being and it is hard to imagine how White will be able to place a knight there.

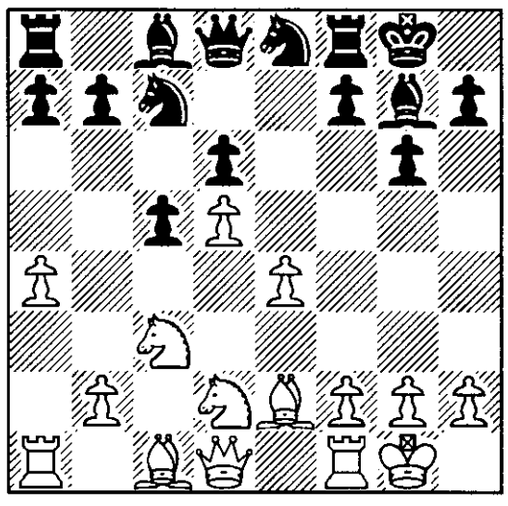
Apart from 11...b6 (see the previous main game) Black has also tried:

a) 11...♕e7?! (this looks odd; how did Tal 'know' that the queen belonged on e7?) 12 ♖e1 b6 13 h3 ♖e8 14 ♘c4 ♗a6 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗h4 ♕d7 17 ♗f1 ♗xc4 18 ♗xc4 with a slight plus for White in A.Petrosian-Tal, Lvov 1981.

b) 11...♖b8?! 12 ♘c4 ♖e8 13 ♕c2 a6 14 ♗f4 ♗f8 15 ♖ad1 and Black was already in a right muddle in Lalev-Groszpeter, Varna 1983.

c) 11...♘d7 looks too slow, e.g. 12 ♘c4 ♘e5 13 ♗f4! ♘xc4 14 ♗xc4 a6 (or 14...♖e8 15 ♕d3 h5 16 ♖ae1 a6 17 a5 ♖b8 18 h3 b5 19 axb6 ♖xb6 20 ♘a4 ♖b7 21 e5! dxe5 22 ♗e3 e4 23 ♕d1 with a strong initiative for White in Wilder-De Firmian, USA Championship 1986) 15 ♕d3 ♖e8 (Ian Rogers prefers 15...♖b8, but it is difficult to see how Black can arrange ...b7-b5) and now instead of 16 ♕g3?! ♗xc3! 17 ♗xd6?! ♘xd5 18 bxc3 ♘xc3!, as in Rogers-De Firmian, Bor 1984, White should have brought his rook over with 17 ♖ae1 and played ♕g3 next move according to Rogers.

d) 11...♖e8 will transpose to Game 21 in Chapter 3 after 12 f3, but White can also consider 12 a5!? ♕e7 13 ♖e1 ♘d7 14 ♘c4 ♘e5 15 ♗f4 with a slight plus according to M.Kopylov.



12 ♘c4 f5 13 exf5

13 f3 looks harmless after 13...♕e7 14 ♗f4 g5 15 ♗g3 f4 16 ♗f2 b6 17 ♖e1 ♗a6 18 e5 ♗xc4 19 exd6 ♘xd6 20 ♗xc4 ♕d7, as in Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Belgrade 1995.

13...♗xf5

Not 13...gxf5? 14 ♗f4 when Black has lost all his counterplay.

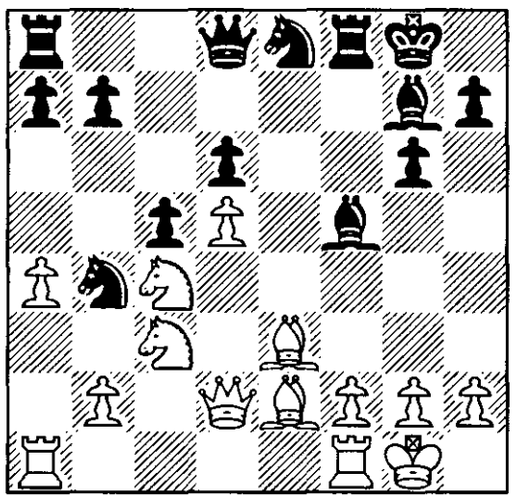
14 ♗e3

The natural 14 ♗f4 can be met by 14...♗d3!? 15 ♗g3 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♘f6 17 ♗e2 (Black was 'threatening' ...♘h5) and now Black should probably try to get things going on the queenside with 17...a6 and ...♖b8, as in Vilela-Vera, Matanzas (4th match game) 1989. Note also that after 14 ♘e3 ♗d7 the white pieces look rather clogged up.

14...♘a6

If this is the best that Black can do then he would be better off playing 10...♘e8 rather than 10...♘c7 11 a4 ♘fe8. In fact, Fritz suggests that Black can try the greedy 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♗e4, trying to grab the d5-pawn, and this speculative idea is certainly worth considering as the white bishops lack real scope at the moment.

15 ♕d2 ♘b4



16 g4

A tricky move but perhaps not a good one since it weakens the white kingside. After 16 ♖ac1 White has a small plus according to Rogers.

16...♗c8

The bishop must go all the way home because 16...♗d7 fails to 17 ♘xd6! ♘xd6 18 ♗xc5.

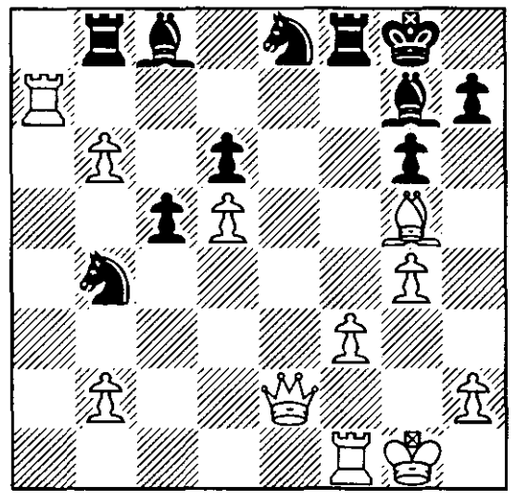
17 f3 b6 18 ♗g5 ♕d7 19 a5!?

Rogers criticises this move and prefers 19 ♘e3 'with a slight advantage to White', but this still looks good for Black after 19...♘c7 and ...♗b7, when White is struggling to justify his extravagant kingside advances.

19...b5

The start of a long forcing sequence that culminates in a positional queen 'sacrifice'.

20 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 21 ♘b6 ♕xe2 22 ♕xe2 axb6 23 axb6 ♖b8 24 ♖a7



Black has three pieces for the queen but White still holds the initiative. Most of Black's pieces are lying dormant on the back rank.

24...♖xb6

Rogers recommends 24...♗b7, but I don't see how Black can meet 25 ♕e6+ ♔h8 26 ♖d1!, since the pawn on f3 is immune from capture due to ♖xb7 and ♕xe8+.

25 ♗e7 ♘xd5 26 ♕c4! ♗e6 27 ♗xf8 ♘dc7

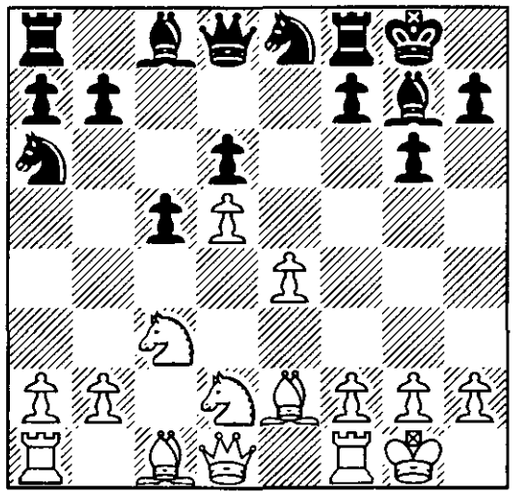
After 27...♔xf8 White has 28 ♖e1 ♖b4 29 ♕a6, while in the game continuation White has a powerful attack.

28 ♕f4 ♗xf8 29 ♖e1 ♖b4 30 ♕g5 ♖xb2 31 ♕d8 ♗d5 32 ♕d7 ♖b8 33 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 34 ♖xc7 ♖e7 35 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 36 ♖xe7 ½-½

White should never have agreed a draw here, since after the continuation 36...♗xf3 37 g5! d5 38 ♔f2 ♗e4 39 ♔e3! (Rogers) the white king will penetrate to f6 and help deliver mate.

Game 57
Polugayevsky-P.Cramling
Haninge 1989

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘a6 10 0-0 ♘e8!?



11 ♘c4

White may as well play this since 11 ♔h1 and 11 ♖e1 can be met by 11...f5 anyway.

11...f5 12 exf5

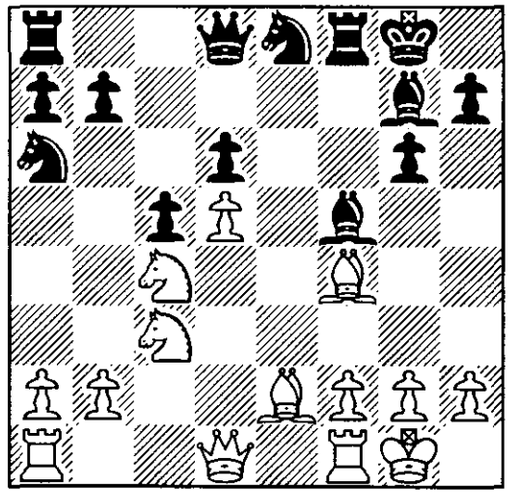
White has also tried:

a) 12 f3 ♖b8 13 a4 ♘b4 14 ♗e3 f4 15 ♗f2 b6 16 ♕d2 a6 17 ♘a2 ♘xa2 18 ♖xa2 left White with a slight plus in Kamsky-Madl, Val Thorens 1989, so maybe Black should try to mix things up a little with 13...♕h4!?

b) 12 ♗f4 g5 (perhaps Black can go the whole hog with 12...fxe4 13 ♕d2 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 b5 followed by ...b5-b4) 13 ♗d2 ♘ac7 (13...f4 14 ♖e1 ♘ac7 15 a4 ♘f6 16 h3 ♘ce8 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♘xe5 was much better for White in Ftacnik-Grünfeld, European Team Championship, Haifa 1989) 14 a4 ♗d4 15 exf5 (F.Portisch's 15 ♔h1 may be better as White threatens 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 f4) 15...♗xf5 16 ♕c1 h6 17 ♘e3 ♘g7 18 ♖a3 ♕f6 19 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 20 ♔h1 ♖ae8 21 ♗h5, when according to Farago White was slightly better in Farago-Szalanczy, Vienna 1990, although I prefer Black after 21...♖e5 as the white d-pawn is an obvious target.

12...♗xf5 13 ♗f4

After 13 ♗e3 ♖b8 14 a4 ♘b4 Black has reached the same position as after move 15 in the previous main game except that White has not yet played ♕d2 and Black has achieved ...♖b8. Needless to say, this is of great help to Black in his aim of achieving ...b7-b5 and he has full equality. It should also be noted that both 13 a4 ♘b4 and 13 ♗g4 ♕h4!? offer Black good chances.



13...b5!?

Black would love to get away with this thematic move if he can. Neither 13...♘ac7 nor 13...♗d3 is effective as White can make do without a2-a4, e.g.

a) 13...♘ac7 14 ♕d2!? (14 a4 transposes to the note to White's 14th move in the previous main game) 14...b5 15 ♘a5 ♕d7 16 a4 b4 17 ♘b5 offered White a promising initiative in Baburin-Pigusov, Voronezh 1988.

b) 13...♗d3 14 ♗g3 ♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♘ac7 16 ♕d2 ♕d7 (16...♘f6 looks more solid) 17 ♘e4 b5 18 ♗e2 ♗d4 19 ♖ad1 ♘xd5?! (a careless move) 20 ♗xd6 ♖xf2 (20...♘xd6 21 ♘xc5 ♕c6! 22 ♕xd4 ♘f4! would have limited the damage, e.g. 23 ♗f3 ♕xf3! 24 gxf3 ♘e2+ 25 ♔g2 ♘xd4 26 ♖xd4 ♖ac8 with some drawing chances) 21

♖xf2 ♘xd6 22 ♘xc5 ♗xf2+ 23 ♔xf2 ♕f7+ 24 ♗f3 ♖c8 25 ♕xd5 ♖xc5 26 ♕xd6 1-0 Piskov-Yudasin, USSR 1989.

14 ♘e3

The point of Black's idea is that after 14 ♘xb5 ♗d7! White has two pieces en prise and has to give them up for a rook via 15 ♗xd6 ♗xb5 16 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 with a very playable position for Black.

14...♗d7

This is usually played almost automatically, but in fact 14...b4 is Black's clearest path to equality, e.g. 15 ♗xa6 (15 ♘a4 ♗d7 16 ♗g3 ♕a5 17 b3 ♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 ♗b5 favoured Black in Van Wely-Luther, European Junior Championship, Arnhem 1989) 15...bxc3 16 bxc3 ♘c7 17 ♗e2 ♗xc3.

15 ♗g3 c4

I have reached this position a couple of times myself and have always opted for 15...♘ac7, inspired by the thematic game Palatnik-Khuzman, Baku 1988: 16 ♕c2?! b4 17 ♘e4 ♗f5 18 ♗d3 (or 18 f3 ♗d4 19 ♗f2 ♗xe4 20 fxe4 ♖xf2 21 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 22 g3 ♕xh2+ 23 ♔f3 ♘g7 24 ♗d3 ♖f8+ 25 ♘f5 ♕xc2 26 ♗xc2 gxf5 27 ♔g2 ♗xb2 28 ♖ab1 ♗d4 29 exf5 ♘ge8 0-1 Peric-Khuzman, Balatonbereny 1988) 18...♗xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♘b5 20 ♘c4 ♘f6 21 ♗d3 ♘h5! 22 ♖ae1 ♘xg3 23 hxg3 ♘d4 24 ♕d2 a5 25 ♕d1 ♖a7 26 ♕g4 ♖af7 27 ♕h4 ♕c7 28 ♖d1 ♘f5 29 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 30 ♖d2 ♗d4 31 b3 ♖8f6 32 ♕e4 ♕f7 33 ♘e3 ♖e5 34 ♕d3 ♖xe3 0-1. However, on both occasions my opponent has avoided the erroneous 16 ♕c2?! and gone for 16 ♕d2. Now it is a mistake to play 16...b4 17 ♘e4 ♘b5 because of 18 ♗xb5! ♗xb5 19 ♖fe1 a5 20 ♖ac1 and Black had no counterplay at all in A.Shneider-Kinsman, European Club Cup, Oerebro 1995. Instead Black should play 16...♕e7 17 ♖ae1?! b4 18 ♘cd1 ♕f7 with a perfectly good game in Perkins-Kinsman, Surrey open 1996. Here 17 ♖fe1 was better than 17 ♖ae1?!, when White may still be slightly better.

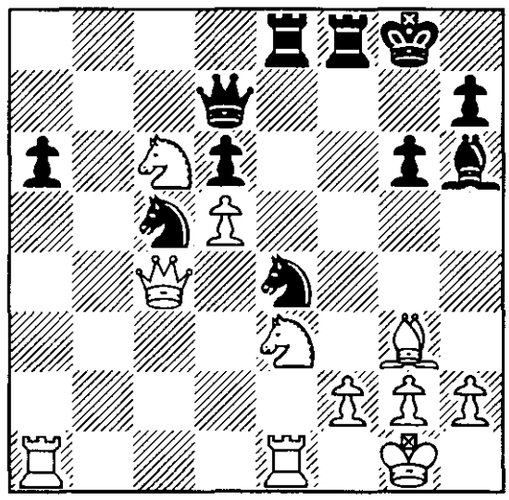
16 a4 b4 17 ♘a2

Or 17 ♘e4 ♗f5 18 ♗xc4 ♗xe4 19 ♗xa6 ♗xb2 20 ♖a2 ♗c3 21 ♘c4 and now instead of 21...♖b8, as in Bernal-Bellon, Spain 1989, I prefer 21...♕g5!? trying to round up the d-pawn.

17...♗xb2 18 ♖b1 ♗g7 19 ♗xc4

19 ♘xc4 looks safer, e.g. 19...♘c5 20 ♘xb4 ♘xa4 21 ♘a2 ♘c5 22 f3 a5 23 ♘b6 ♗f5 24 ♘xa8 and a draw was agreed in C.Hansen-Wedberg, Harplinge 1998,

19...♘c5 20 ♘xb4 ♗xa4 21 ♕e2 ♘f6 22 ♘c6 ♕d7 23 ♗b5 ♗xb5 24 ♕xb5 ♘fe4 25 ♖bc1 ♗h6 26 ♖fe1 ♖ae8 27 ♖a1 a6 28 ♕c4



28...♕f7?!

Here I cannot see anything wrong with 28...♘xg3 29 hxg3 ♖e4, e.g. 30 ♕c2 ♗xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 32 fxe3 ♕g4 33 ♘e7+ ♔g7 34 ♕c3+ ♔h6 and Black has all the chances.

29 ♘g4 ♗g7 30 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 31 ♕xc5 ♗xa1 32 ♖xa1 ♕f4 33 g3 ♕xg4 34 ♕xd6 ♖xf2 35 ♔xf2 ♕e2+ 36 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 37 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 38 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 39 ♔g2 ♕e2+ ½-½

Summary

The 'knight's tour' variation has been safely defused, as we saw in Games 53 and 54, whilst the 7 ♘d2 and 8 e4 system should probably be met by an early ...♘e8, as in Game 57, rather than the slower ...♘c7 in Games 55 and 56.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7

8 e4

8 ♘c4 0-0 *(D)*

9 ♗f4 – *Game 53*

9 ♗g5 – *Game 54*

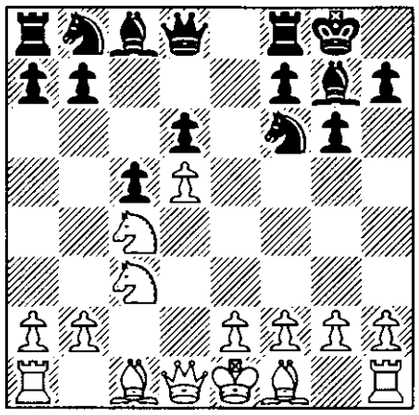
8...0-0 9 ♗e2 *(D)* **♘a6**

9...♘e8 – *Game 57*

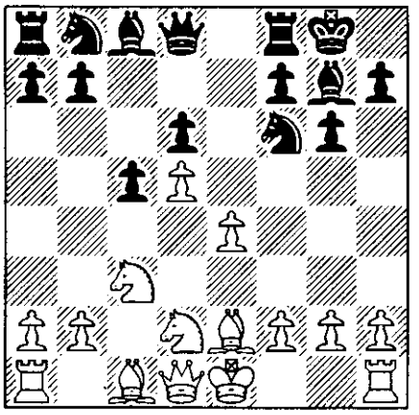
10 0-0 *(D)* **♘c7**

10...♘e8 – *Game 55*

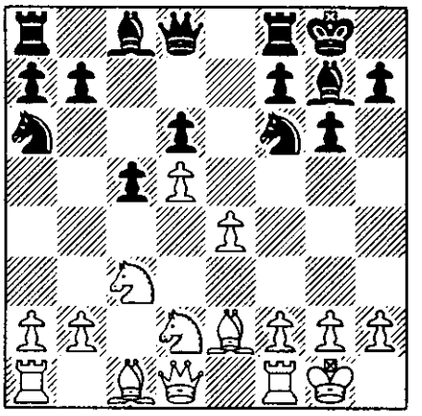
11 a4 – *Game 56*



8 0-0

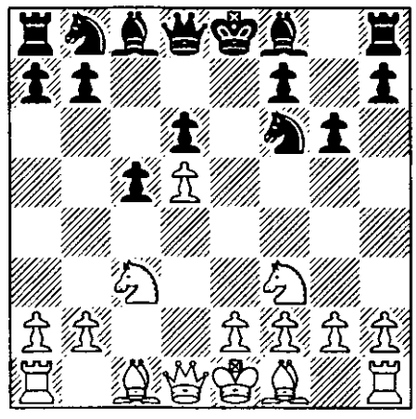


9 ♗e2



10 0-0

CHAPTER TEN



White plays an early ♗f4 or ♗g5

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6

In this chapter we round off our survey of the Modern Benoni with a look at two of White's less well-known systems, 7 ♗f4 and 7 ♗g5 (and the related 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5). Both of these plans take Black away from his routine moves, presenting unique problems for the second player. Although neither system should really offer White an advantage, many unwary Black players have been caught out over the years and they should not be taken lightly.

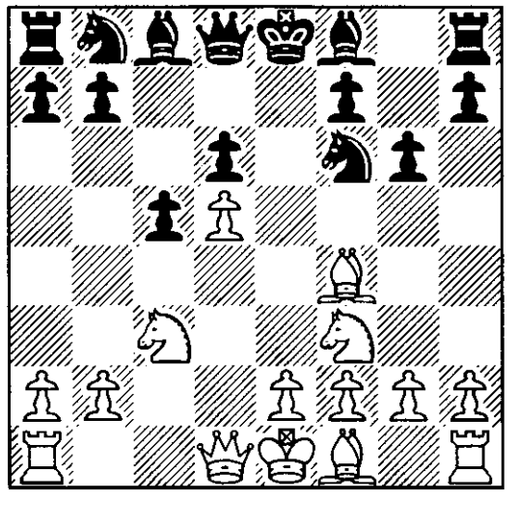
The idea of an early ♗f4 is to disrupt Black's development by putting pressure on the d6-pawn. After 7 ♗f4 Black has a choice between 7...♗g7 (Games 58 and 59) and 7...a6 (Games 60 and 61).

The last three games in this chapter deal with systems that feature an early ♗g5 by White. Games 62 and 63 cover the sharp 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5, while the final game of the book features the positional 7 ♗g5.

Game 58
Piket-Van Wely
Monaco (7th match game) 1997

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗f4

The actual game went 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7 10 ♗f4, but I prefer the game move order since Black could have played 8...♘bd7 here with the idea of 9 ♗f4 0-0! 10 ♗xd6?? ♘b6.



7...♗g7

7...a6 is the subject of Games 60 and 61.

8 ♕a4+

This check is awkward for Black as neither 8...♘bd7?? 9 ♗xd6, 8...♕d7 9 ♗xd6 ♕xa4 10 ♘xa4 ♘xd5 11 0-0-0 nor 8...♔f8 look very good for Black.

8...♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7

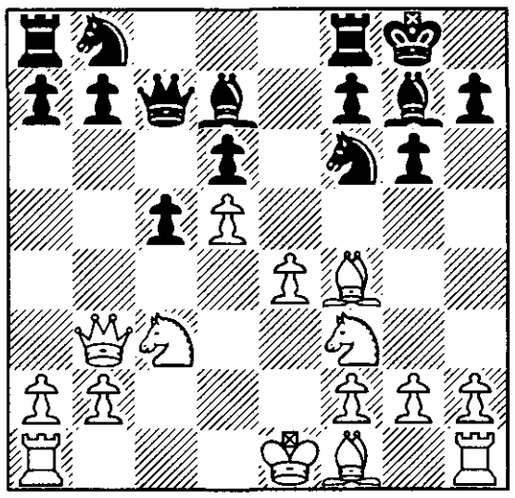
The enterprising 9...b5 is the subject of the next main game.

10 e4!

The sloppy 10 ♘d2 allows Black to

play 10...♘h5 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♗g3 0-0 with a very respectable position.

10...0-0



11 ♘d2!

Now is the right time for this move. White's alternatives are unconvincing:

a) 11 e5 ♖e8! 12 ♗e2 (or 12 0-0-0 ♘h5 13 exd6 ♕a5 with good play) 12...♘h5 13 ♗e3 dxe5 14 0-0 ♕b6 when it not clear that White had enough for the pawn in Garcia Martinez-Kasparov, Baku 1980.

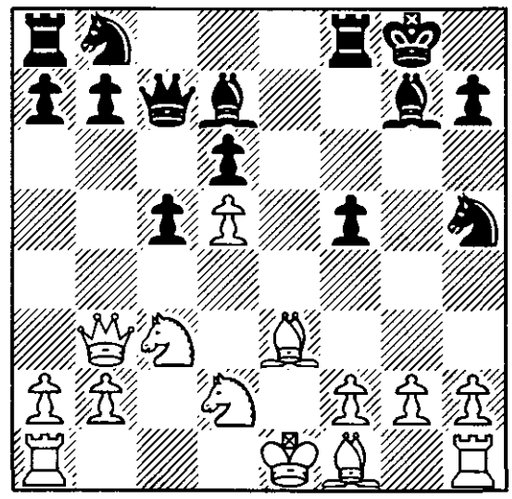
b) After 11 ♗e2 Black should play actively with 11...b5! (11...♘h5 12 ♗e3 ♗g4 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘d7 15 0-0 ♘hf6 slightly favoured White in Salov-Psakhis, Moscow 1986) 12 ♗xb5 (12 e5 ♘h5 13 exd6 ♕a5 also gives Black a very active position, while 12 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 13 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 is also obviously fine for him) 12...♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 14 ♗d2 ♕xb5 15 ♕xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♘xd6 ♗d3 17 0-0-0 ♘a6 with a very pleasant game in Fraguela Gil-N.Bloch, Groningen 1973.

11...♘h5!

Black must play actively else White will simply play ♗e2 and 0-0 and then plant a knight on c4 with a huge position. Note that 11...♖e8?! 12 ♗e2 b5 is much worse than in note 'b' above due to 13 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 14 ♘cxe4 f5 15 0-0 fxe4 16 ♖ae1, as in Bronstein-Kopylov, Yerevan 1981.

12 ♗e3 f5 13 exf5 gxf5

The correct recapture, remaining active at the cost of a crippled pawn formation. After 13...♗xf5?! 14 ♗e2 ♘f6 15 h3 ♘a6 16 a3 ♖ae8 17 0-0 Black had no real counterplay in Oll-Norwood, Groningen 1984.



14 ♗e2 ♗e8!

For a short while 14...f4?! was popular, but this seems to be refuted by 15 ♗xc5!, e.g.

a) 15...♕xc5?! 16 ♗xh5 ♘a6 17 0-0 was clearly bad for Black in Twardon-Mukhtarov, Katowice 1993.

b) 15...f3 16 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 (or 16...♕xc5 17 ♘de4! ♗xc3+ 18 bxc3 ♖e8 19 0-0 ♕c7 20 ♖fe1 and White was winning in Bellon Lopez-Klinger, Cienfuegos 1985) 17 gxf3! ♕xc5 18 ♕xb7 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♘f4 (or 19...♕xc3 20 0-0! and wins) and now there was nothing wrong with 20 ♕xa8! instead of 20 ♖g1+, as was played in Korchnoi-Nunn, London 1984.

c) 15...♘a6 16 ♗a3 ♖ae8 (or 16...f3 17 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 18 gxf3 ♘f4 19 ♘ce4! ♖c8 20 0-0, as in Starck-Enders, Jueterbog 1985) 17 ♘ce4 ♘f6 18 ♗xd6! ♕a5 19 ♘c3 and White had consolidated his material advantage in Malaniuk-Norwood, Lvov 1986.

15 ♘f3 h6

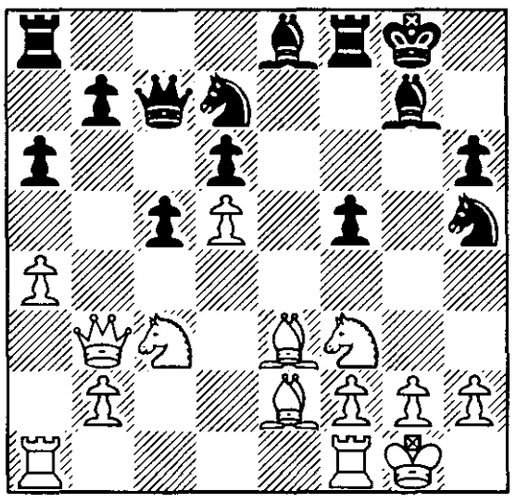
15...f4?! seems premature after 16 ♗d2 as Black has given up control of the e4-square for no good reason. This was graphically illustrated in the game Röder-

Joachim, Niedersachsen 1989: 16...♕e7 17 0-0 ♘d7 (17...♗xc3? 18 ♗xc3 ♕xe2 19 ♕xb7 ♕a6 20 ♕xa8 ♗d7 21 ♖fe1 ♘c6 22 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 23 dxc6 was winning for White in Spraggett-Norwood, Toronto 1985) 18 ♖fe1 ♘e5 19 ♘e4 ♔h8?? 20 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗xh5 ♗xh5 22 ♘xd6 1-0.

16 0-0

After 16 ♘b5 Black's simplest is probably 16...♗xb5 17 ♕xb5 a6 18 ♕d3 ♕f7 with an unclear game in Ruzele-Ulibin, USSR 1986.

16...a6 17 a4 ♘d7



18 ♖ae1!?

A very creative decision. White decides that all the action is going to take place on the kingside and regroups his forces with this in mind. There can hardly be anything wrong with 18 ♖fe1 either. Black's problem is that his pawn structure is very ragged, so unless he is able to remain active White will eventually be able to attack the loose pawns.

18...♖b8

Piket suggests 18...♕a5!? instead.

19 ♕d1

Now Black has to beware a discovered attack on the loose knight on h5.

19...♕b6?!

The immediate 19...♕d8 is similar but probably better, e.g. 20 g3 ♗xc3?! (20...f4 is only a little worse for Black) 21 bxc3 ♕f6 22 ♘d2 ♘g7 23 ♘c4 b5 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♘a5 with a plus for White in Ivanchuk-Sevillano, Baguio 1987.

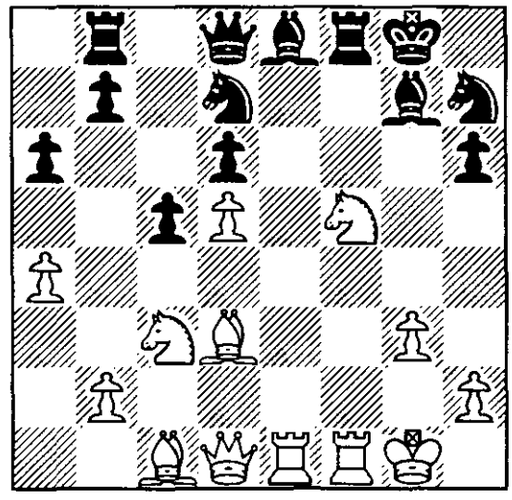
20 ♗c1

The bishop may have been wanting to go here anyway, to side-step ...f5-f4, while now White is ready to meet 20...♕b4 with 21 ♘a2!

20...♕d8 21 g3!

White prepares ♘h4, eyeing the weak f-pawn.

21...♘hf6 22 ♘h4 ♘h7 23 ♗d3 f4 24 ♘f5 fxg3 25 fxg3



This represents the triumph of White's strategy. Within only a few moves he has transformed the position. Now both of his rooks stand on open files and the knight on f5 is a monster. The rest is not much more than a mopping up operation.

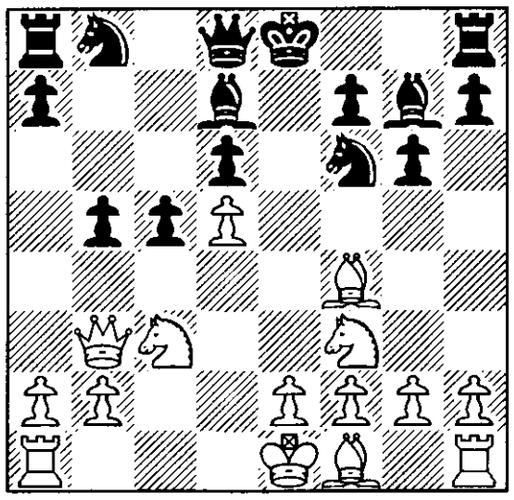
25...♖xf5 26 ♗xf5 ♘e5 27 ♖xe5 dxe5 28 ♘e4 ♕b6 29 ♗e3 ♕xb2 30 ♕g4 ♔h8 31 ♕h4 h5 32 ♕e7 ♗xa4 33 ♗h6 ♖g8 34 ♘d6 ♕d4+ 35 ♖f2 ♕d1+ 36 ♖f1 ♕d4+ 37 ♖f2 ♕d1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕xd5+ 39 ♗e4 ♕xe4+ 40 ♘xe4 ♗xh6 41 ♖f7 ♗g7 42 ♕xb7 ♗c2 43 ♖f5 ♘f6 44 ♘xf6 ♗xf5 45 ♕f7 1-0

Game 59
Alexandria-Shabalov
USSR 1989

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 ♘f3 d6 7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+

♗d7 9 ♕b3 b5!?

This aggressive pawn sacrifice was introduced by the Belgian IM Luc Winants in 1986 and quickly became very popular. However, White should be able to consolidate providing he captures the right pawn.



10 ♗xd6

10 ♘xb5?! is far more risky. Black then has:

a) 10...♕a5+ 11 ♘c3 ♘e4 (or 11...♘xd5 12 ♕xd5 ♗xc3+ 13 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 14 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 15 ♘xd2 with a slight plus for White according to Bellon Lopez, although 13 ♘d2 is well worth exploring) 12 ♗d2 ♘xd2 13 ♘xd2 0-0 14 ♘c4 ♕c7 15 e3 ♘a6 16 ♗e2 and White was simply a pawn up in Zsu.Polgar-Renet, Brest 1987.

b) 10...♗xb5! with the forcing sequence 11 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 12 ♗xd6 (White may as well keep capturing pawns as Black will soon seize the b-file otherwise) 12...♘e4 13 ♗e5 0-0 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♕a4 ♖b8 16 ♕xe4 ♕a5+ 17 ♘d2 (17 ♔d1? went down quickly in Zsu.Polgar-Illescas, Bilbao 1987, after 17...♖xb2 18 e3 ♘f6 19 ♕e5 ♕a4+ 20 ♔e1 ♕b4+ 21 ♔d1 ♖e8 22 ♕xe8 ♘xe8 23 ♖c1 ♘f6 24 ♗d3 ♘xd5 0-1) 17...♖xb2 18 ♖d1 ♘f6! (18...♖fb8 19 ♕f4 is much less clear) 19 ♕c4! (19 ♕e5?! failed to 19...♖xa2 20 e3? ♖e8 21 ♕f4 ♖xd2 22 ♖xd2 ♘e4 in Barlov-Zelcic, Biel 1991) 19...♖xa2 20 e3 ♖b8 21 ♗e2 ♖bb2 22 0-0 (White jettisons the piece, but at least his king is safe) 22...♖xd2 23 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 24 ♗f3 ♖c2 25 ♕f4! (an improvement on 25 ♕a4? ♖c1 26 e4 c4 27 d6 c3 28 ♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 29 ♗d1 ♕d2 30 h3 ♘xe4 31 d7 ♘c5 0-1 Bus-Prymula, Hradec Kralove 1988) 25...♘xd5 26 ♕e5+ ♘f6 27 g4 h6 28 h4 ♕c3 29 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 30 ♖a1 and White managed to salvage a draw in Khenkin-Arkhipov, Moscow 1989.

10...♕b6 11 ♗e5

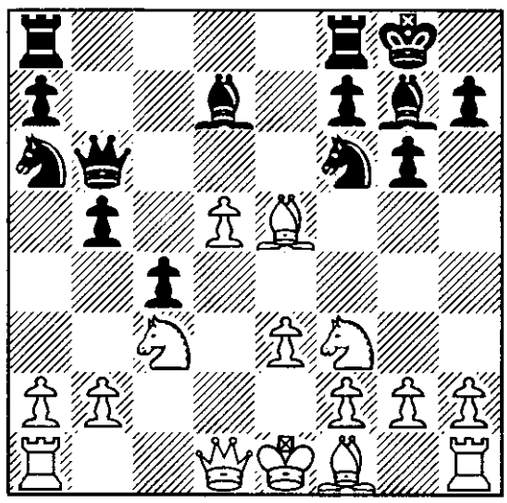
The bishop stands well here. 11 ♗g3 is unnecessarily passive.

11...0-0 12 e3 c4

12...b4 13 ♘b1 ♗b5 is inferior due to 14 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 15 ♘c3 ♕a6 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♘e4 and Black was all over the shop in Khenkin-Jaulin, Paris 1991.

13 ♕d1 ♘a6

13...b4 14 ♘b1 ♗b5 still does not really help Black after 15 ♘bd2, e.g. 15...♖c8 16 ♖c1 ♘bd7 17 ♗xc4 ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xc4 19 ♘dxc4 ♕a6 20 0-0 ♖e8 21 ♘c6 ♖e4 22 ♕b3 1-0 Yakovich-Zelcic, Belgorod 1991, while Winants's original 13...♖d8 is just too slow to cause White any real problems.



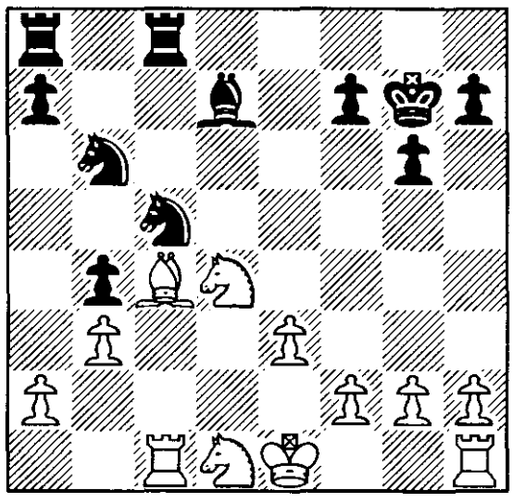
14 ♕d4

The point of Black's play is that after 14 a3 ♘c5 15 ♕d4 ♗f5, as in Van der Sterren-Winants, Budel 1987, his pieces are very active. However, White has two promising alternatives:

a) After the calm 14 ♗e2 ♖fd8 15 ♕d4 ♘c5 16 0-0 ♖ac8 17 d6! ♘e6 18 ♕h4 White was already close to winning in Santos-Hauchard, Porto 2000.

b) 14 a4!? b4 (the critical test of White's idea is 14...♘b4 15 axb5 ♗f5 16 ♗xc4 ♘c2+ 17 ♔e2 ♘xa1 18 ♕xa1, when White has excellent compensation for the exchange) 15 ♘b5 ♗xb5 16 axb5 ♕xb5 17 ♕d4 ♕b6 18 ♕xb6 axb6 19 ♗xc4 b5 20 ♗xb5 ♘c7 21 ♗a4 ♘cxd5 with a clear extra pawn for White in Volzhin-Van Blitterswijk, Lausanne 2000.

14...♖fc8! 15 ♖c1 b4 16 ♘d1 ♕xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♘xd5 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♗xc4 ♘b6 20 b3 ♘c5



Black seems to have enough activity for the pawn in this endgame and in fact he even manages to take the initiative after White's careless next move.

21 0-0?

Shabalov prefers 21 ♘b2 a5 22 0-0 a4 23 ♘d3 (23 bxa4 ♘cxa4 24 ♘xa4 ♘xc4 25 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 26 ♘b6 ♖xd4 27 exd4 ♖a7 should fizzle out to a draw) 23...♘xc4 24 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 25 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 26 bxc4 ♖c8 27 ♖c1 ♔f6 28 c5 ♗e6 29 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 30 ♖c4 b3 31 axb3 axb3 32 ♖b4 ♖xc5 33 ♔f1 with equality, although even here there are plenty of players who would play for a win with 33...♖c3.

21...♘d3 22 ♖c2 ♘xc4 23 bxc4 ♗a4 24 ♘b3 a5

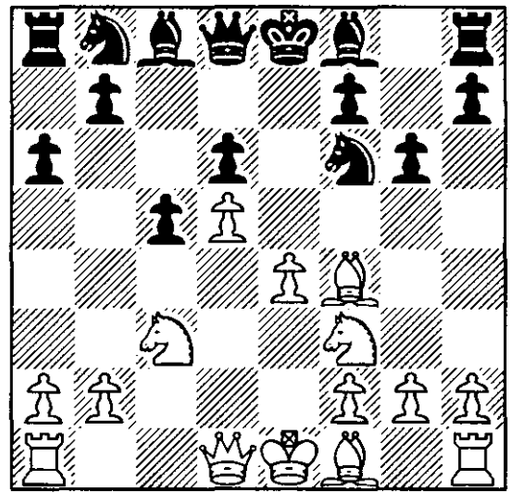
White is in a right tangle.

25 f3 ♗b5 26 ♘d2 a4 27 ♘f2 ♘e5 28 ♖fc1 ♘xc4 29 ♘xc4 b3 30 axb3 axb3 31 ♖c3 ♖xc4 32 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 33 ♘d1 ♗d3 34 ♘b2 ♗c2 35 ♘c4 ♖a4 36 ♘d2 ♖a2 37 ♔f2 ♗d3 38 ♖d1 b2 39 ♔g3 ♖a1 0-1

Game 60
H.Pedersen-Emms
Esbjerg 1996

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 ♗f4 a6 8 e4!?

White goes for it in the centre, not worrying about ...b7-b5. 8 a4 is also very common, of course, as we shall see in Game 61, where 8 ♘d2 is also considered. Note that the actual move order in the game was 7 e4 a6 8 ♗f4.



8...b5

This consistent follow-up seems preferable to 8...♗g7 9 ♕a4+ ♗d7 (John Emms has experimented with 9...♔f8!? a couple of times, but it is hard to believe that White is not at least slightly better after 10 ♗e2 ♕e7 11 0-0) 10 ♕b3 when White seems to have an improved version of Game 58, e.g.

a) 10...♕c7 11 e5 ♘h5 (not 11...dxe5?! 12 ♗xe5 ♕c8 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xg7 ♖g8 15 ♗h6 and White was clearly on top in Fedorowicz-Seret, Cannes 1987) 12 exd6

♕c8 13 ♗e3 0-0 14 a4 ♗g4 15 ♗e2 ♘d7 16 0-0 with a very good position for White in Fedorowicz-Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1986.

b) 10...b5 11 ♗xd6 b4 12 ♘d1 ♘xe4 13 ♕e3 ♗f5 14 ♗xc5 and Black did not have enough for the pawn in Moiseev-Yefimov, USSR 1988.

c) 10...♕e7 11 ♗e2! b5 12 0-0 0-0 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♗f5 15 ♗f3 c4 16 ♕d1 and White enjoyed a slight advantage in Khalifman-Psakhis, Sverdlovsk 1987.

The black bishop finds itself awkwardly placed after 8...♗g4 9 ♕a4+! ♘bd7 10 ♘d2 b5 11 ♕c2, e.g. 11...♘h5 (or 11...♘b6 12 a4!) 12 ♗e3 ♘b6 13 a4 b4 14 ♘cb1 with a slight edge for White due to his control of the c4-square in Kinsman-Foisor, Paris open 1990.

9 ♕e2

It is easy for Black to equalise after 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5, e.g. 10...♗d6 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♘c6 ♘xc6 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 dxc6 ♕xd1 16 ♗xd1 with a quick draw in Yusupov-Sax, Linares 1983.

9...♗e7

Although the e7-square looks like an odd place for the black bishop, this move seems preferable to 9...♘h5 10 ♗g5 ♗e7 11 ♗h6 ♗f8 12 ♕e3 (if nothing else White can repeat moves with 12 ♗g5) 12...♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 b4 14 ♘d1 ♗g4 15 ♘d2 ♗xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♕f6 17 ♘c4 ♘d7, as in Lputian-Magerramov, Uzhgorod 1988, when White can consider 18 f4!? ♘xf4 19 g3 ♘h5 20 ♗e2 ♘e5 21 ♖f1 ♕e7 22 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 23 ♗xh5 with dangerous attacking chances.

10 e5

I am not convinced that this advance is the correct way forward for White. Two alternatives are worth considering, although neither seems sufficient for an advantage:

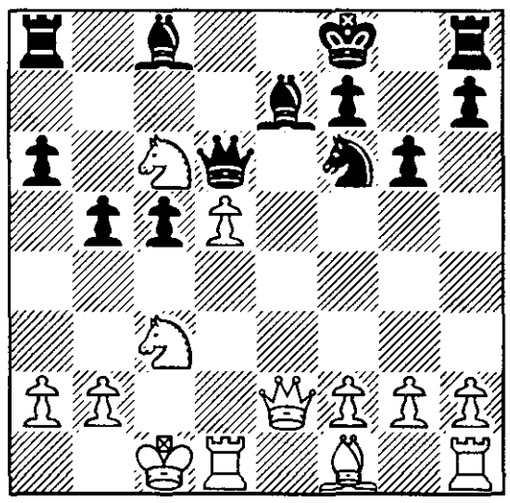
a) 10 0-0-0 0-0 (10...♘h5 allows the irritating 11 ♗h6) 11 e5 (11 h3 ♖e8 is too slow for White) 11...♘g4 12 ♘e4 (or 12 exd6 ♗xd6 13 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♘e4 ♕f4+) 12...dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘d7 and Black was at least equal in Alburt-D.Gurevich, USA Championship 1986.

b) 10 ♕c2!? (having forced the black bishop to occupy the ungainly e7-square, White rushes to unravel his own kingside) 10...0-0 11 a4 (after 11 ♗e2 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♗f8 Black was fine in Flear-Wahls, Dortmund 1989) 11...b4 12 ♘b1 (or 12 ♘d1 b3!?) 12...♘h5! 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♘bd2 ♘d7 with equality in Yakovich-Wedberg, Stockholm 1999.

10...dxe5

10...♘h5? 11 ♗h6 dxe5 led to quick disaster for Black in Flear-King, Edinburgh 1985, after 12 0-0-0 f6 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♕xe5 ♔f7 15 d6 ♗f6 16 ♕d5+ ♗e6 17 ♕xa8 ♕a5 18 ♕f3 b4 19 ♗c4 ♗xc4 20 ♕b7+ 1-0.

11 ♗xe5 ♘bd7 12 0-0-0 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕d6 14 ♘c6 ♔f8!



White has now gone as far as he can and suddenly finds that he is still behind in the development of his kingside. Although the white d-pawn looks strong, in fact it is a liability and might easily be picked off in the endgame.

15 g3

After 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 d6 ♕xe2 17 ♗xe2 ♗b7 18 ♗f3 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♔g7 20 ♖he1 ♖he8 21 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 Black went on to win the endgame in Milovanovic-

Hulak, Pula 1990.

15...♗f5 16 ♗g2 ♖e8 17 ♖he1 ♗d8 18 ♕d2 ♔g7

Having skilfully tidied things up, Black now starts to take control of the position.

19 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 20 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 21 h3 h5 22 ♕g5 ♖e8 23 ♕d2 b4 24 ♘e2 ♘e4 25 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 26 g4 ♖c4+ 27 ♘c3 bxc3 28 bxc3 0-1

Game 61
Benjamin-Nunn
Oxford 1977

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 a6 8 a4

Apart from 8 e4 (see the previous game) White has also tried:

a) 8 ♘e4 ♘xe4 9 ♕a4+ ♘d7 (9...b5 10 ♕xe4+ ♗e7 is also possible) 10 ♕xe4+ ♗e7 11 ♗xd6 ♘f6 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 14 ♖c1 b6 and Black had satisfactory position in Dreev-Ivanchuk, Lvov 1987.

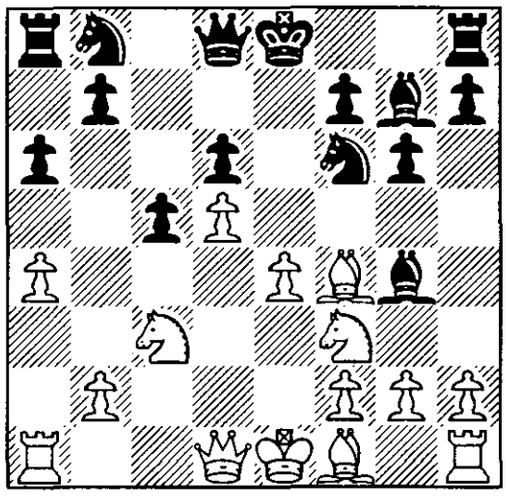
b) 8 ♘d2 b5! (8...♘h5 9 ♕a4+ is irritating for Black) 9 a4 ♘h5 (9...b4 10 ♘ce4 ♘h5 11 ♗g5 f6 12 ♗e3 f5 13 g4 fxg4 14 ♘c4 ♗f5 15 ♗g5 ♕c7 16 ♕d3 was very murky in Dementiev-Minasian, Yerevan Junior Championship 1983) 10 ♗e3 b4 (not 10...f5?! 11 g4! fxg4 12 axb5) 11 ♘ce4 ♘d7 12 ♘c4 ♘df6 13 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 14 g3 a5 with easy equality for Black in A.Petrosian-Guseinov, USSR Team Championship, Azov 1991.

8...♗g7 9 e4

Of course 9 ♘d2 ♘h5! is fine for Black.

9...♗g4!

White can meet 9...0-0 with 10 ♘d2, when Black is struggling to create any real counterplay, e.g. 10...♘h5 11 ♗e3 ♘d7 12 ♗e2 ♘e5 13 f4 ♘g4 14 ♗xg4 ♕h4+ 15 g3 ♕xg4 16 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 17 h3 ♗d7 18 g4 with a pleasant space advantage in the endgame in Schussler-Sosonko, Reykjavik 1980.



10 ♗e2

10 ♕b3!? is similar to Chapter 2, Game 11, except that ♗f4 and ...♗g7 have been played. This should be to Black's advantage and 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xb7 ♘xe4 12 gxf3 (or 12 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♕xa8 ♗xb2 14 ♖a2 ♗c3+) 12...♘xc3 13 ♕xa8 0-0 offers good compensation for the exchange.

10...0-0

10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 is likely to transpose to Chapter 3 once White castles kingside.

11 ♘d2

After 11 0-0 we would again be back in the realms of Chapter 3.

11...♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♘h5 13 ♗e3 ♘d7 14 g4!?

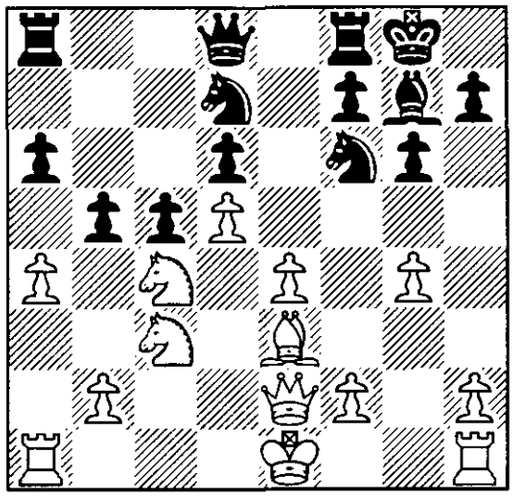
This may be too ambitious, but after 14 0-0 Black does not have to settle for 14...♖e8 (see Chapter 3, Game 16) but can try for more with 14...♕h4 15 ♘c4 (15 g3 ♕h3 16 ♘f3 ♘df6 17 ♘g5 ♕d7 18 ♔g2 h6 19 ♘h3 ♘g4 was fine for Black in D.Paulsen-Suba, Dortmund 1981) 15...♘f4 16 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 17 g3 ♕f6 18 f4 ♖ae8 with a very messy position in Röder-Suba, Vendrell 1996.

14...♘hf6 15 ♘c4?

15 h3 allows Black to play 15...b5! 16 0-0 b4 17 ♘d1 ♖e8 18 f3 ♘b6 with a fine game in Vukic-Velimirovic, Borovo 1981, so White should play 15 f3 immediately, e.g. 15...b5 16 0-0 b4 17 ♘d1 a5 with unclear chances in Lputian-Romanishin,

Yerevan 1986.

15...b5!



Typically energetic play from Nunn.

16 ♘xd6

16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♘xd6 is far too risky for White.

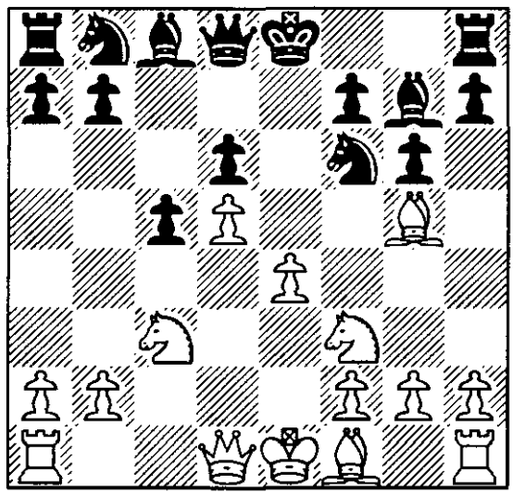
16...♕e7 17 g5?

The white knight is out on a limb after 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖d1, but that was White's only chance.

17...♘h5 18 ♘f5 gxf5 19 ♕xh5 f4! 20 ♗d2 ♗xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♕xe4+ 22 ♔d2 b4 23 ♗f6 ♕xd5+ 0-1

Game 62
Stean-Nunn
Birmingham 1976

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5



Although this system was quite popular in the 1970s, it is rarely seen nowadays.

8...h6 9 ♗h4 g5!?

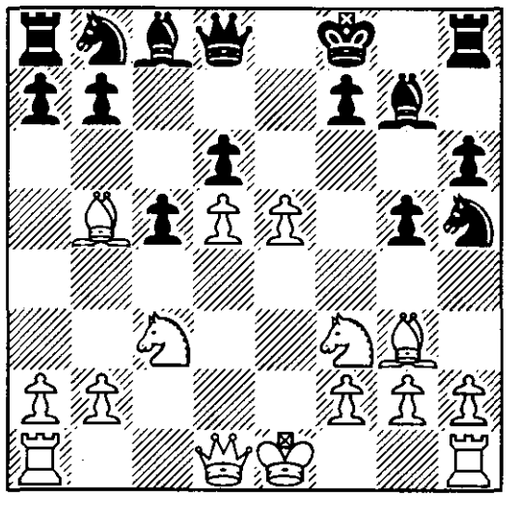
Black attempts to snag the key dark-squared bishop with 10 ♗g3 ♘h5. However, as we shall see below White has an irritating check which cuts across his plans. 9...0-0 10 ♘d2 a6 11 a4 allows White a firm grip on the position, while the more solid 10...a6 is the subject of the next main game.

10 ♗g3 ♘h5 11 ♗b5+! ♔f8

The real problem for Black is that 11...♗d7 runs into 12 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 (12...♘xd7 13 ♗xd6) 13 ♘e5! when Black's knight on h5 is loose, e.g. 13...dxe5?! 14 ♕xh5 ♕e7?! 15 ♘d1 ♕f6 16 ♘e3 ♕g6 17 ♘f5 ♘d7?? 18 ♕xg6 1-0 was the game Szabo-Klein, Santa Fe 1960.

12 e5!?

This dynamic pawn sacrifice is the point of White's play. After 12 ♗e2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 ♘d2 a6 15 a4 ♘e5 White can achieve a small plus with 16 g4!? ♖b8 17 f3 according to Uhlmann. However, Black can equalise with 15...♕e7 16 g4 ♗d4, as in Bobotsov-Levy, Praia da Rocha 1969, as the king will find a safe home on g7.



12...♘xg3

12...a6 13 ♗e2 ♘xg3 14 fxg3 dxe5 15 0-0 transposes to the main game, while if 13 ♗d3 Black should probably transpose to

the note to Black's 13th move with 13...♘xg3 14 fxg3 as 13...dxe5 14 ♗xe5 g4 15 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 looks risky.

13 fxg3

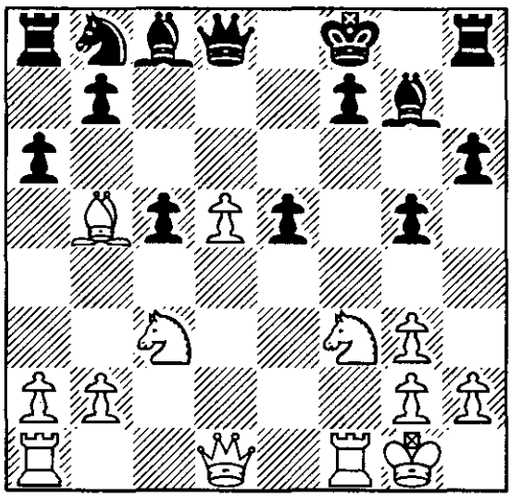
Now White has hopes of developing a powerful initiative down the f-file once he has castled.

13...dxe5

13...g4 14 0-0! is very dangerous for Black, but it is still possible to play 13...a6, e.g. 14 ♗d3 c4 (14...♕b6?! 15 ♘d2! led to a quick defeat for Black in Miles-Wedberg, Stockholm 1976/77, after 15...♗xe5 16 ♘c4 ♗xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♕c7 18 0-0 ♔g7 19 ♕h5 ♖d8 20 ♖f6! ♔xf6 21 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 22 ♖e1+ 1-0) 15 ♗xc4 b5 (after 15...♕b6 White might even consider 16 ♕b3!?) 16 ♗b3 ♕b6 17 ♕e2 and now instead of 17...dxe5 18 0-0-0 b4 19 ♘a4 ♕d6 20 ♘d2 with a big plus for White in Gulko-Savon, Baku 1977, Gulko recommends 17...♖a7, although I still prefer White after either 18 exd6 or 18 ♖c1.

14 0-0 a6

Black must try and get something going on the queenside before his kingside collapses.



15 ♗e2

It may be better to play 15 ♗d3!? b5 (or 15...♔g8 16 ♘d2!) 16 ♘d2 with the idea of 17 ♕h5, which worked out very well for White in the games Miles-R.Hernandez, Biel 1977, and Shashin-Agzamov, Odessa 1977.

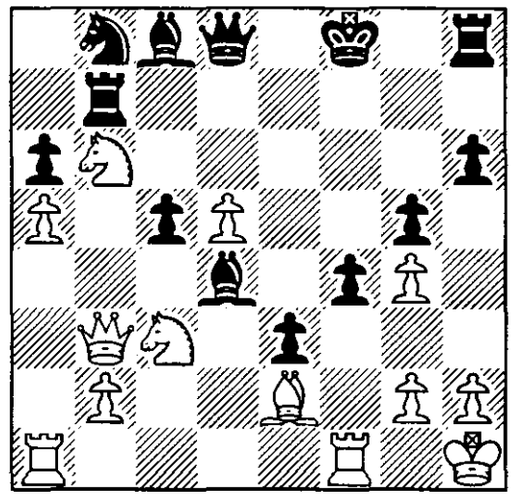
15...♖a7 16 a4 b6 17 ♕b3 f5 18 ♘d2

Stean suggests 18 g4!? and 18 ♖ad1 as possible improvements here, but matters are still far from clear after 18...f4 and 18...♖f7 respectively.

18...e4

18...h5!? 19 ♘c4 ♖h6 has a certain aesthetic appeal, with both rooks acting along the ranks.

19 g4 ♗d4+ 20 ♔h1 e3 21 ♘c4 f4 22 ♘xb6 ♖b7 23 a5



23...h5

Stean gives this an exclamation mark, but I am not sure what was wrong with the natural 23...♔g7.

24 gxh5 ♘d7 25 ♗xa6 ♘f6

Stean recommends 25...♖xh5 to meet 26 ♗xb7 with 26...♔g7! 27 ♗xc8 ♕h8! He suggests 26 g4 with the idea of 27 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 28 a6, but 26...♖h6 27 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 looks okay for Black. Instead 26 ♕d1 looks far less loosening.

After the game move play becomes totally random, but White should really be winning.

26 ♗xb7 ♘xh5 27 ♘e2 ♗g4 28 ♘xd4 ♘g3+ 29 ♔g1 ♖xh2 30 ♔xh2 ♕e8

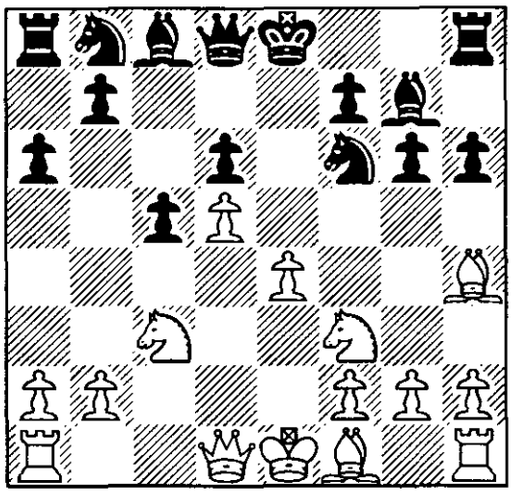
Stean gives 30...♔g7 31 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 32 ♕c3+ and 30...♕f6 31 ♕xe3 ♕h6+ 32 ♔g1 ♕h1+ 33 ♔f2 ♕h4 34 ♔e1!! ♘xf1+ (or 34...♘e4+ 35 g3!) 35 ♕f2 with a won position for White in each instance.

31 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 32 ♕xe3 ♕h5+ 33 ♔g1 1-0

After 33...♕h1+ 34 ♔f2 fxe3 35 ♔xg3 or 33...♘e2+ 34 ♕xe2 Black is running out of material.

Game 63
Wegner-Klinger
Lugano open 1984

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 a6!



10 ♘d2

After 10 a4 Black no longer has to worry about ♗b5+ and can therefore switch back to the idea of hunting down the dark-squared bishop with 10...g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 12 ♗e2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘d7 14 0-0 0-0 with a very pleasant position for Black in F.Martinez-De Firmian, Las Vegas 1993.

10...b5 11 ♗e2

Sometimes White plays 11 ♕c2 first, when Black should probably stick with 11...0-0 12 ♗e2 as 11...g5 12 ♗g3 ♘h5 13 a4 ♘xg3 14 hxg3 b4 15 ♘d1 ♘d7 16 ♘e3 ♘e5 17 ♗e2 slightly favoured White in Novopashin-Vaisser, Alma Ata 1978, and Chen De-Lobron, Hanover 1983. Note that after 11...0-0 the immediate 12 a4 b4 13 ♘d1 ♖e8 will transpose to the main game after 14 ♗e2, while if 14 ♘e3 then the thematic 14...b3! 15 ♕d3 15...♘bd7 16 f3 ♖b8 is fairly level, as in F.Portisch-D.Cramling, Reggio Emilia 1979.

The immediate 11 a4 can simply be countered by 11...b4 12 ♘cb1 0-0 13 ♗e2 (or 13 ♗d3?! ♖e8 14 0-0 ♘bd7-e5) 13...♖e8 14 f3 g5 with a level game in Lambert-Nunn, London 1977.

11...0-0

This seems more flexible than 11...♘bd7 12 0-0 0-0 13 a4 b4 14 ♘cb1 ♖e8 15 f4 ♕c7 16 ♗f3 c4 with a very complicated game in prospect in Mikhalevski-Psakhis, Israeli Championship 1996.

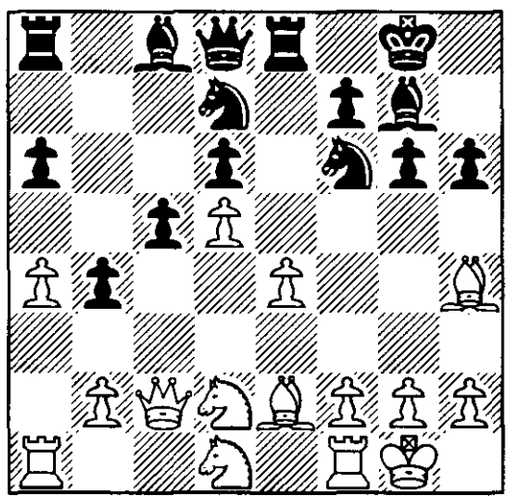
12 ♕c2

White prepares to play a2-a4 in such a way that ...b5-b4 can be countered with ♘d1-e3. After 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♕c2 ♘bd7 14 ♖ae1 c4 15 f4 ♘c5 16 ♔h1 ♗d7 Black had equalised in Sigurjonsson-Grünfeld, Lone Pine 1979.

12...♘bd7

12...♖e8 is also possible, when a transposition to the game is very likely, although 13 a4 b4 14 ♘d1 ♖a7!? (Perenyi) is worth considering, with the idea of swinging the rook from a7 to e7 at some point.

13 a4 b4 14 ♘d1 ♖e8 15 0-0



If White delays castling with 15 ♘e3 then Black should still play his standard 15...b3!? to meet 16 ♕d3 or 16 ♕b1 with

16...♖b8 and 16 ♕xb3 with 16...g5 17 ♗g3 ♘xe4.

15...b3!?

15...g5 16 ♗g3 ♘xd5 17 ♘c4 looks too risky for Black. The game move deflects the white queen from the c2-square and at the same time prepares the manoeuvre ...♖b8-b4.

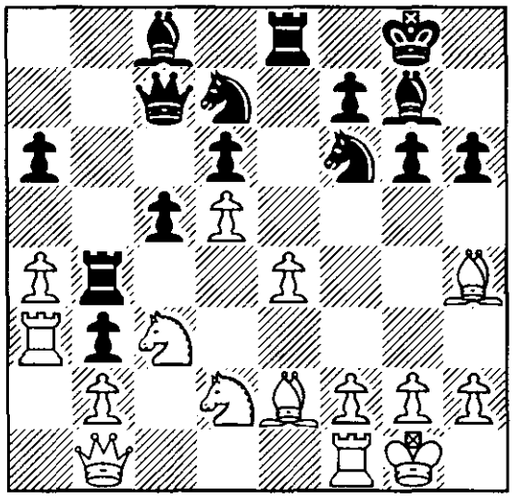
16 ♕b1

This looks like a clumsy square for queen, but after 16 ♕d3 Black can follow John Nunn's suggestion of 16...♖b8 17 f4 ♖b4 18 ♘c4 ♘b6 19 ♘ce3 ♘xc4 20 ♘xc4 a5! with the idea of ...♗a6, placing an awkward pin on the knight.

16...♕c7

Here 16...g5!? 17 ♗g3 ♘xd5 does look playable since 18 ♗xd6 ♕f6! (Klinger) is promising and 18 ♘c4 ♘f4 19 ♗xf4 gxf4 20 ♘xd6 ♖e6 21 ♘xc8 ♘e5! also offers Black a very active game.

17 ♘c3 ♖b8 18 ♖a3 ♖b4



19 ♗xf6

White should probably take the knight as the immediate 19 ♖xb3 ♘xe4 20 ♘cxe4 ♖exe4 21 ♘xe4 (not 21 ♕xe4? ♖xe4 22 ♘xe4 f5 followed by ...g6-g5 and ...f5-f4) 21...♖xb3 22 ♗e7 ♖xb2 23 ♗xd6 ♕b6 24 ♕e1 (not 24 ♕d1 f5) 24...♖a2 should be good for Black.

19...♘xf6 20 ♖xb3 ♕b6

I do not really understand this move as Black should have a good game after 20...♘xe4 21 ♘cxe4 ♖exe4 22 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♘xe4 f5 as the queen and two bishops are very active. After the game move Black has some pressure for the pawn, but it is not necessarily enough

21 ♕c2 ♗d7 22 ♖a1 ♖xb3 23 ♘xb3 ♖b8 24 ♖a3 ♘g4 25 ♘d1 ♘e5 26 ♘d2 ♕a5 27 b3 ♖b4 28 ♗c4?

A bad mistake. After 28 ♘e3 ♖d4 29 ♖a2 White may be able to consolidate his position.

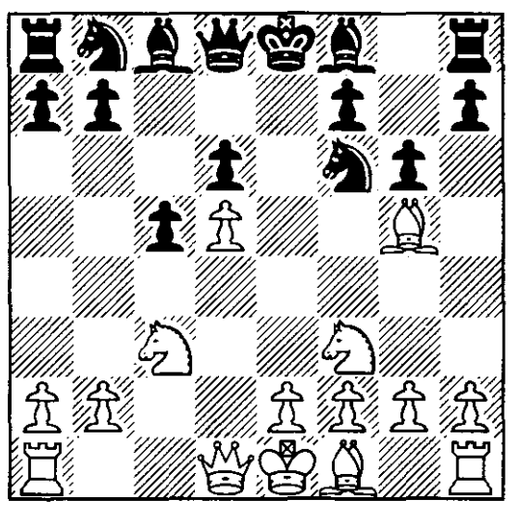
28...♘xc4 29 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 30 ♕xc4 ♕e1+ 31 ♕f1 ♕b4 32 ♖a2 ♕xb3 33 ♖d2 ♕xa4

Black has ample compensation for the exchange and can simply roll his c-pawn down the board.

34 ♕d3 ♕a1 35 h4 ♗b5 36 ♕f3 c4 37 ♔h2 c3 38 ♖c2 ♗a4 39 ♖xc3 ♗e5+ 40 g3 ♗xd1 0-1

Game 64
Psakhis-Gavrikov
Yerevan Zonal 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 ♗g5



This system is much quieter than the one with 7 e4 and 8 ♗g5, but it still makes an appearance in grandmaster play from time to time.

7...h6 8 ♗h4 g5!

There is no reason not to snare the

important dark-squared bishop.

9 ♗g3 ♘h5 10 e3

A couple of other moves are worth considering:

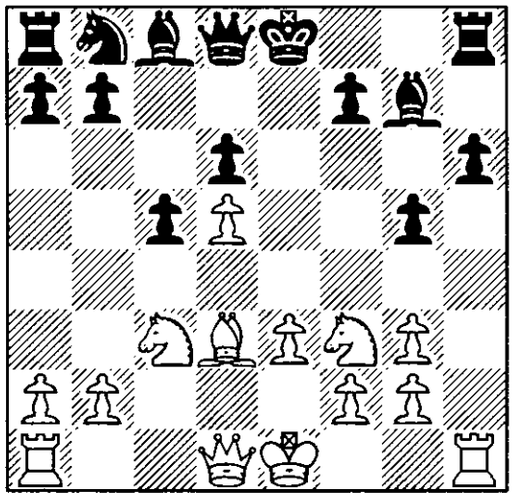
a) 10 ♕a4+?! contains the 'trap' of 10...♕d7 11 ♘b5, but after 10...♘d7 11 ♕e4+ ♕e7 12 ♗xd6 ♕xe4 13 ♘xe4 f5 it is White who has been trapped.

b) 10 e4?! ♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♗g7 is inferior to the game as White has no play along the b1-h7 diagonal.

c) 10 ♘d2 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♗g7 12 ♘c4 (12 e3 transposes to the note to White's 12th move) slightly clogs up Black's development, so he should probably prefer 11...♘d7 to meet 12 ♘c4 with 12...♘b6.

10...♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♗g7 12 ♗d3

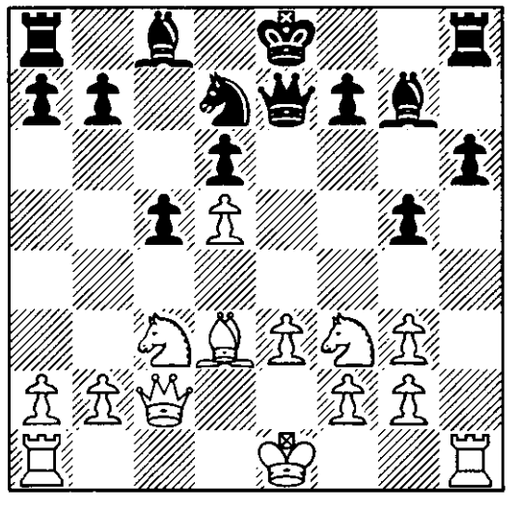
After 12 ♘d2 a6 13 a4 (or 13 g4?! ♘d7 14 a4 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 0-0 16 0-0 f5 17 gxf5 ♗xf5 and Black was already slightly better in Grigorian-Kasparov, Baku 1980) 13...♘d7 14 ♗e2 (14 ♘c4 ♘e5 and 14 ♘ce4 ♘f6 are both fine for Black) 14...0-0 15 ♘c4 ♕e7 Black had no real problems in Grinberg-Manor, Israeli Championship 1986.



12...♕e7

12...♘d7 13 ♕c2 ♕e7 transposes to the main game. Although it appears slightly risky for Black to castle kingside while White is strong on the b1-h7 diagonal, this is perfectly playable too, e.g. 12...0-0 13 ♕c2 f5 (13...♘a6 14 a3 ♘c7 is interesting, e.g. 15 ♗h7+ ♔h8 16 ♗f5 ♕f6 17 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 18 ♖c1!? when the threat of ♘e4 is slightly unpleasant for Black) 14 0-0 a6 15 a3 ♘c7 16 ♖ad1 b5 with a reasonable game in Razuvaev-Holm, Polanica Zdroj 1972.

13 ♕c2 ♘d7



14 ♘d2

White must find a waiting move, since after 14 0-0 h5! Black has the initiative on the kingside, e.g. 15 ♗f5 ♘e5 16 ♗xc8 ♘xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♖xc8 18 ♕f5 ♖d8 19 ♔g2 and now instead of 19...♕e5, as in Hartston-Sowray, London 1980, perhaps 19...h4!?

Another decent waiting move is 14 a4, since after the stereotyped 14...a6?! White has 15 a5! with the idea of 16 ♖a4-e4, as in Boersma-D.Gurevich, Groningen 1988. Instead of 14...a6?! Black can try 14...♘e5, e.g. 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗b5+ ♔f8 and the king will find a nice home on g7.

14...♘e5

Here 14...a6 15 a4 is probably no more helpful to White than to his opponent, e.g. 15...♘e5 16 ♗f5 ♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♕d7! with equality, along similar lines to the next note.

15 ♗f5 ♗xf5 16 ♕xf5 c4?!

It was better to play 16...♕d7 17 ♕xd7+ (or 17 ♘ce4 ♔e7!) 17...♔xd7 18 ♔e2 f5 with an equal endgame in Vilela-Ye Jiangchuan, Lucerne Olympiad 1982.

17 ♔e2 0-0?!

17...♖b8 would have been better than this move, castling into it.

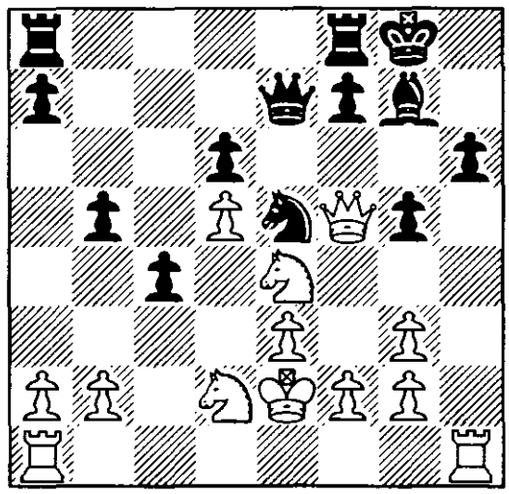
18 ♘ce4 b5

see following diagram

19 ♖xh6! ♘g6

19...♗xh6 20 ♘f6+ ♔g7 21 ♕h7+ ♔xf6 22 ♘e4 is mate. However, after the game continuation Black is simply a pawn down with a horrible position.

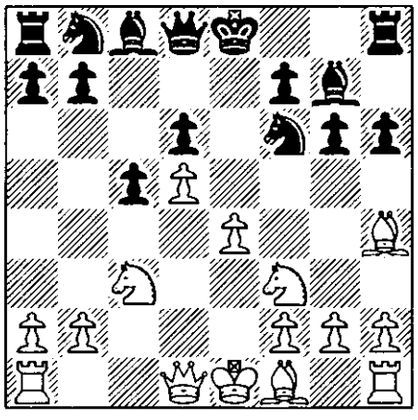
20 ♖h5 ♕e5 21 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♖b1 g4 23 f4 gxf3+ 24 gxf3 f5 25 ♘g5 ♘e7 26 f4 ♗h8 27 ♘e6 ♖fc8 28 e4 a5 29 exf5 ♘xd5 30 ♘e4 c3 31 ♖bh1 ♗f6 32 ♘xf6+ 1-0



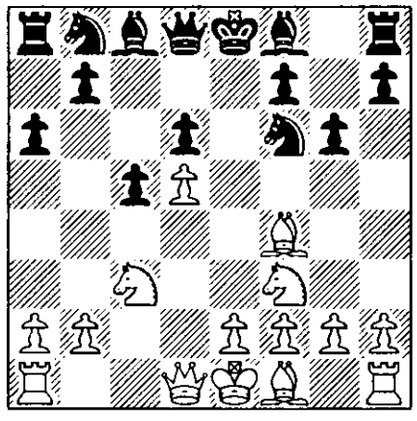
Summary
None of the systems in this chapter should cause Black too many problems if he is well prepared. After 7 ♗f4 Black should play 7...a6! (Games 60 and 61) rather than 7...♗g7 (Games 58 and 59). Black also has nothing to fear after 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 a6! (Game 63) or 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♗g3 ♘h5 (Game 64).

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6

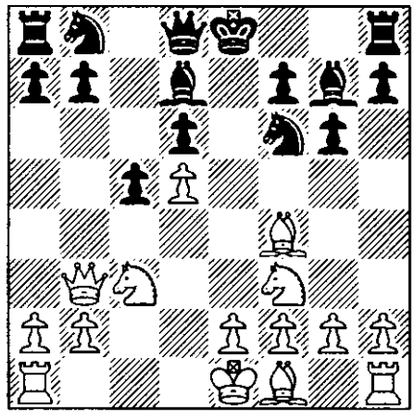
7 ♗f4
7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 (D)
9...g5 – *Game 62*
9...a6 – *Game 63*
7 ♗g5 – Game 64
7...♗g7
7...a6 (D)
8 e4 – *Game 60*
8 a4 – *Game 61*
8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕b3 *(D)* **♕c7**
9...b5 – *Game 59*
10 e4 – *Game 58*



9 ♗h4



7...a6



9 ♕b3

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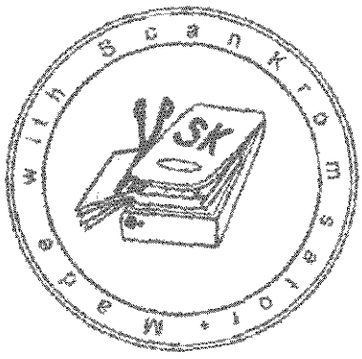
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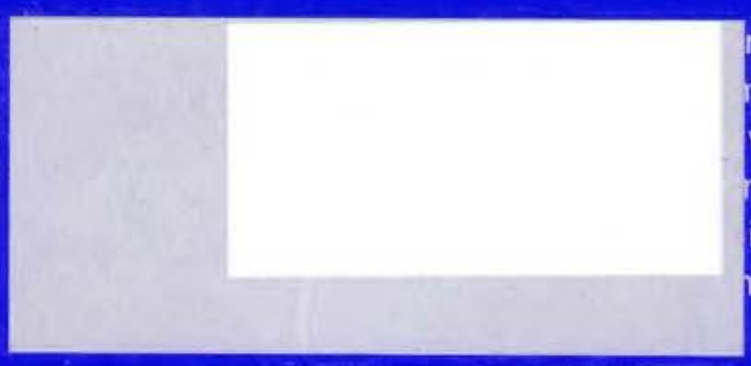

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